

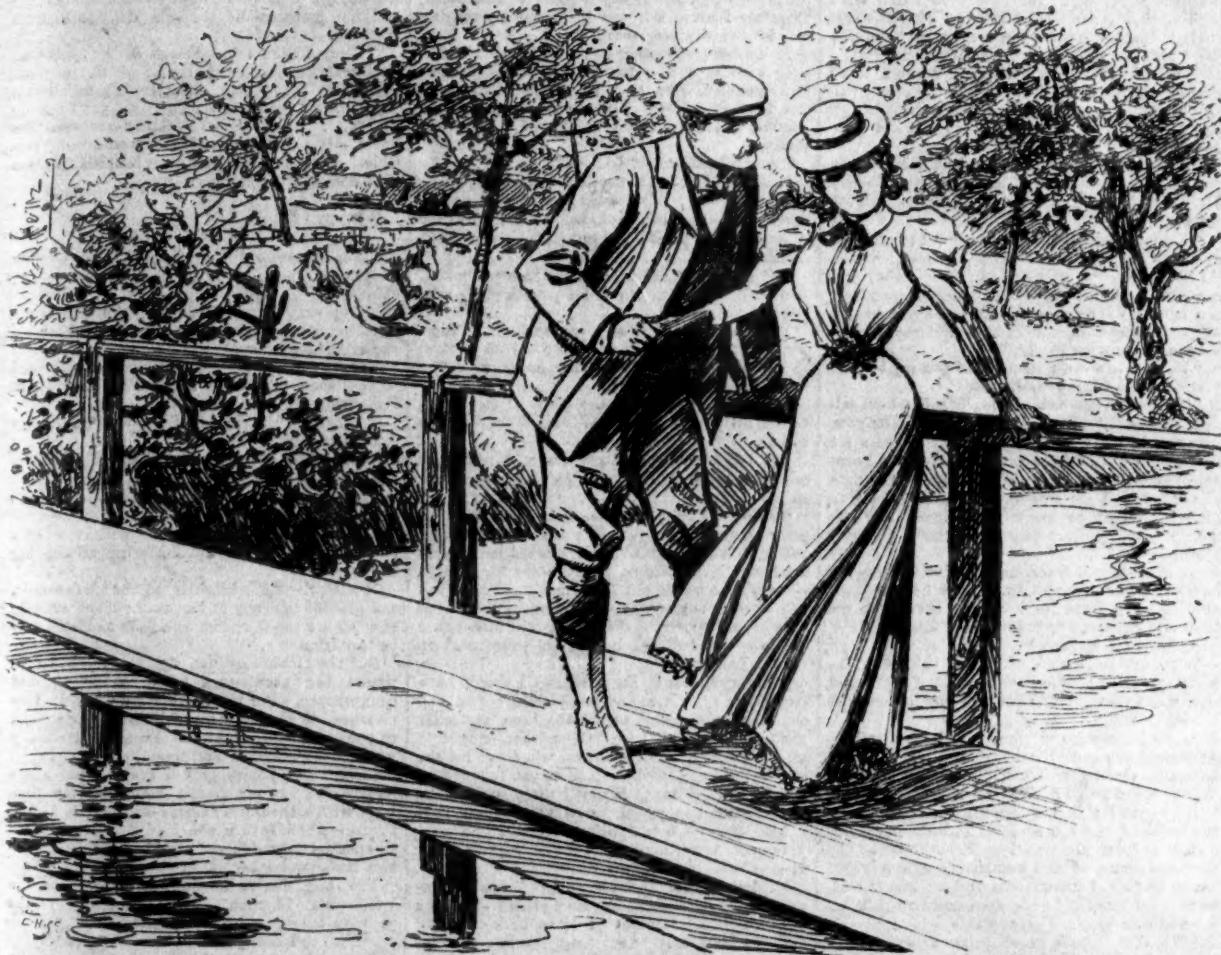
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ERNEST LEIGH DREW NEARER STILL AND GENTLY TOOK HER HAND WITHIN HIS.

### POPPY'S ROMANCE.

#### [A NOVELETTE.]

"ERNEST, do you intend to obey me in this matter?"

No reply from the young man, flicking with his walking-stick the dead leaves scattered in such profusion around him.

"Do you hear me, sir? Do you intend to obey me in this matter?"

Father and son were standing together at the further end of the avenue leading to Leigh Towers. The former regarded with knit brows and angry eyes the young man before him, apparently indifferently toying with the dead leaves at his feet.

But, in fact, Ernest Leigh was but giving himself time to conquer the angry feelings and harsh words that were so near the surface, for he re-

membered that the provoker of them was his father.

With a last mighty effort he raised his dark brown head, and looking up straight into his father's face, replied, slowly and respectfully,—

"Do not ask me any further, father! In all other respects I will obey you; but in this—never!"

"Very well, young man. Perhaps you do not think sufficiently what the consequences of your refusal to accede to my wishes may be; therefore I will give you due time for reconsideration. For the present we will put the matter on one side; but, remember, if by tomorrow evening you can't give me a satisfactory reply then you may go to—well, anywhere you choose! You shall no longer be any son of mine! There, I have said it!"

"But father," began the young man, quietly, though the words came forth from a frame tingling with suppressed excitement.

"Don't say another word, sir, unless you can promise what I require," broke forth the excited

and angry father. Then he added, "But I should like to hear your objection or objections to Miss Adeline Merton. I should consider her handsome enough to satisfy the tastes of the most fastidious."

"She is very handsome," Ernest Landon quietly replied.

"On you really do acknowledge that one point in her favour!" sneered Sir Francis Landon.

His son bit his lip sharply beneath his drooping moustache; but this was the only visible sign of the angry feelings he was experiencing.

"And," continued the baronet, with scornful tones, "what are your objections to the lady whose beauty, evidently, is not in fault?"

"Father, I do not love Adeline Merton. Surely that is sufficient reason for my rejection of your wishes!"

"Do not love her!" sneered the father. "I suppose you do not absolutely hate her?"

Again the young man addressed had a hard struggle with his emotions; but he conquered still.

"I have no reason to hate Adeline Merton," he answered, in a low tone.

"I should think not, indeed, sir! And as for not loving her—why, of course, a man looks rather to the advantages to be derived from his marriage, and then love and all that sort of humbug naturally follow. Now, turn just to this point with me."

Ernest Landon silently followed, as his father, with rapid steps, walked sharply down the avenue to the entrance gates.

"Now," continued the baronet, "look well around you. What woods—what rich land! And all this as far as the eye can stretch—aye, further, too!—may be yours if you have the good luck to win Adeline Merton's hand and fortune; for, boy, remember that but a small portion of the scene before you is in my possession. Oh, Ernest, you can't be foolish enough to throw away such a chance! And the girl likes you, and is quite willing!"

"Father, do not ask me farther. I have told you already that I could never marry Adeline Merton, and you know we Landons seldom retract."

"You are right there, sir, and speak the truth," exclaimed the now thoroughly aroused baronet. "I have vowed to myself that if my son will not consent to do as I wish him, then he is no longer son of mine. Now you know the consequences of your stubbornness and obstinacy, and the sooner we part the better."

"Father, you can't mean what you say!" sorrowfully asked the young man.

"To quote your own words, 'we Landons seldom retract!' You have my answer in your own words. You can draw on my bankers for five hundred pounds, and that is all you will ever get of my money. Now, out of my sight as soon as you can! I am due at Colonel Helston's to dinner to-night, so we will part here, and, remember, when you come to your senses, you may send to me."

Sir Francis ended, and then, without bestowing another glance on the son whom he was thus sending forth from his home, he turned on his heels and departed to the house.

And Ernest Landon?

When the last sound of his father's departing footsteps had died away, he also turned and slowly and thoughtfully bent his way towards the house.

Arrived there he repaired to his own private sitting-room, and throwing himself into his favorite chair, gave himself up to sad musings. What should he do? Where should he go?

He went over in his own mind all the facts of the case and the cause of his sudden and angry dismission from his luxurious home; but as the face and figure of the woman respecting whom the quarrel had arisen occurred to him, a cold, hard look came into his eyes, and he shook his head in a determined manner.

"No, that I could never bring myself to do," he murmured. "I would rather go forth and earn my own living in the humblest way than marry Adeline Merton, and thus secure all her wealth! And then—Come in!" he added, in a louder key, as a faint tapping made itself heard at his door.

The door opened slowly and quietly, and a woman entered, at sight of whom Ernest Landon rose, and with a cold and courtly bow offered his chair to his visitor.

"No, thank you, Ernest; I do not think I must sit down as I am afraid I may be hindering you; but, oh, Ernest! I have heard all, and I am so sorry!"

Ernest Landon started, while a crimson flush dyed his cheek; but no sound issued from his lips as he turned his face away, and stared steadily out of the window at the scene beyond.

Fair fields that would later on reveal all the wealth they contained, now hidden beneath the dark brown sods. Wild and far-stretching woods that spoke of a wealth of timber. And all this he must turn away from and leave for ever, because he would and could not bring himself to take as wife the woman now standing but a few paces from him.

"Ernest," the latter whispered, as she came nearer to him, and laid a white and well-shaped

hand upon his coat-sleeve—"Ernest, you do not think I tried to listen?"

"Of course not," he replied; but there was a ring of scorn in the words, and the faintest uplifting of the upper lip accompanied them. The woman at his side noted it all.

"No," she resumed, "I did not try to listen; but I was—"

"Do not trouble to excuse yourself, Adeline," broke forth the young man. "You heard all, you say, and therefore it is needless to inform you now that I am just contemplating packing up all my belongings for my departure this night, therefore I must ask you to excuse my making this interview a very short one."

He moved to the door as he spoke, and held it open wide as a sign for his visitor to depart; but Adeline Merton took no notice whatever of the hint conveyed. Looking forth from the window she clasped her hands and murmured, softly,

"And all this might be his!"

"Adeline," called Ernest Landon from his position at the door, "do not let us enlarge upon the reason of my dismissal from Leigh Towers. Surely it must be a painful subject to both of us, considering—"

"Considering that I am come here purposely, Ernest, to plead with you for your father's sake—and for my own."

The last words in a lower and softer tone, while her beautiful brown eyes filled with tears, as she glanced timidly up at the man before her.

Softened somewhat by the sight of her grief, he left his post at the open door and drew nearer to her.

"Oh, Ernest, Ernest! say you will not leave us all—leave me!" came the pleading tones once again.

"Adeline, I can't promise it! I can only remain here at Leigh Towers upon one condition, and that one you have already heard me aver to my father is impossible. I am sorry for us both—sorry that we should have met. Adeline, you will meet many suitors in the society which is your proper sphere, and soon you will forget that you ever fancied you had given your heart to Ernest Landon."

"Never, Ernest! Do you think I should have stooped to come here and to plead with you had not love, strong and passionate, been my ruler and guide? No, Ernest. Other men may woo me, but none of them will ever win from me the smallest iota of that feeling we call love. And why? Oh, Ernest, Ernest! can't you make your father happy? I heard your words that you could never love Adeline Merton; but, supposing she is willing to put that condition aside, at—"

"Adeline, once and for all I tell you, a marriage between us can never take place! So press the subject no further. I leave here to-night, and we two may never meet again; but let us part in friendship, Adeline. We have been old playmates in days gone by, and I do not think we have quarreled more than the ordinary run of children, so let us part friends. Come, Adeline, let us shake hands, and wish me God speed and prosperity where'er I pitch my tent."

And Ernest Landon drew nearer his beautiful companion, and held forth his hand with a friendly smile. And Adeline Merton drawing her small figure up to its full height she proudly threw up her quenched head, and with sparkling eyes and kindling cheek regarded the handsome face bending to her with its pleasant smile.

"Shake hands with you when you have treated me so!" she broke forth in low tones, which told too plainly the intensity of her feelings. "Never, Ernest Landon! You have listened to my professions of love to you—a love unshaken and unsought, which, I could not help but betray, and then you coolly reject it, cast it on one side, and calmly talk to me, with a smile on your face, of a friendly parting—a friendly parting for the sake of old times. When the thought of these same old times is maddening to me, recalling, as it does, to me the happiest moments of my existence! the moments that one by one ripened the child's attachment into the woman's love."

She ceased, and short, quick sobs followed, shaking her whole frame.

"Adeline, Adeline, calm yourself! It is useless thus exciting yourself."

"Useless! ah, that is the very word." Then, as though remembering herself, the girl once more drew herself up, and with a low inclination of her pretty head, continued, "but I am detaining you from packing, Ernest. Farewell, we may meet again," and with a cruel and bitter smile, marring the beauty of her perfect face, Adeline Merton passed forth through the open door, leaving the man she so loved to his own thoughts and his preparations for his departure from his home.

"Poor Adeline!" soliloquised the latter, as he closed the door upon her, and seriously set himself to the task of collecting his belongings. "Poor girl, I am sorry for her, and yet I can do nothing for her. Even had I never seen the other, still a marriage with her would be impossible. What a fearful thing a misplaced affection is!" and set to packing.

"Poppy!"

"Yes, aunt."

"You can carry this jelly to old Granny Higgins after tea. Would you like the walk, child?"

"Very much, Aunt Susan. I shall so enjoy a stroll across the fields this lovely weather, and I can come back across the bridge through Mildmay Park, and then as I come through the cornfield I will get some poppies to brighten up the grate in the parlour."

"Lor, bless the child! How you are always thinking about the flowers."

"But I love them so, Aunt Susan, especially the dear, bright poppies, and you know they are my namesakes, so I suppose I ought to like them best of all," replied the girl, as she laughed merrily, and put back with small, delicate-looking hands the sunny ringlets clustering around her fair face.

Mrs. Butler sighed lightly at the girl's words, and glanced tenderly at her, as one looks tenderly at anything precious that one fears suddenly may be torn from one.

But the girl heeded not the glance, but continued her needlework with smiling, flushed countenance. For she had her secret, and a very pleasant secret too. One that is familiar enough when they are as fair and fresh-looking as Poppy Butler. The young girlish brain beneath the wealth of clustering golden hair was even then busy with a thousand dreams and fancies for the future—which future, she fondly hoped, was to be spent side by side and hand in hand with—But that was her secret.

The short silence that intervened between the two—spent in such sweet dreaming by the younger one—was broken by the elder.

"Poppy, I hear Mr. Leigh has returned."

The girl started, and in her agitation ran the point of her needle far into the pretty pink finger.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, in a low tone of pain.

"What is the matter, Poppy?"

"I have pricked my finger, Aunt Susan."

"Oh, is that all? Why, I very often prick mine, and badly too, but I should never think of crying out and startling one in that way."

"Did I startle you, Aunt Susan? I am very sorry, I am sure, but it really does pain me so," replied the girl, as she drew forth her handkerchief, and wound it round the poor injured member.

"Isn't it better now, child?" asked her aunt, presently.

"Yes, thank you, Aunt Susan. I must be more careful in future."

"Yes, but did you hear what I asked you?"

"What was it, Aunt Susan?"

Mrs. Butler looked up sharply at the girl, then repeated,—

"I hear Mr. Leigh has returned. Have you seen him? But, bless me! what makes your cheeks such a colour!"

"Are they very red?" Poppy asked, nervously, as she bent her head, as though she found her work most absorbing.



"Bad!" repeated Mrs. Butler. "I should think so. Just like two scarlet poppies, I am sure you need not go far to gather any."

The girl laughed merrily.

"Oh, Aunt Susan, please do not! I should not like to lose my cheeks, and I am sure they can't be of such a beautiful colour as the real poppies in the cornfields. But here comes Ann with the tea-things. I will put up my work, and help her to lay the cloth."

So saying the girl arose, put by her work carefully in a drawer, and then busied herself in arranging the tea-table. And so Mrs. Butler's remark remained without answer.

Was it by accident, or was it intentional on the girl's part? Time will show.

An hour or two later Poppy Butler was crossing the bridge leading from Mildmay Park. The jolly had safely reached its destination, and met with great approval from Granny Higgins.

Now, in place of the small basket, Poppy held in her hand a book and one or two starlike white flowers—the moon-daisies of the lover's language. Half-way across the wooden bridge she stopped, and, leaning over the low rail, plucked two of the first of her daisies from their stalks, and, with trembling fingers, dropped them down into the clear water below.

"One for me, one for—"

Here she hesitated, and glanced shyly and fearfully lest the very leaves and water might hear her secret. But no one being in sight, she murmured, ever so softly,

"And one for Ernest!"

Then, flushing rosy-red as the dear syllables left her lips, she watched with bright eyes and earnest gaze the course of the floating white stars. The rippling waters carried the flowers steadily on their surface—steadily, but slowly.

"How far apart they are!" murmured the girl, as she noted the distance between the white blossoms. "Shall we be like them, and never be anything more to each other than strangers?"

But no! Happy and joyful sign! the starry types of the lovers' course gradually drew nearer each other. Then the outstretched petals closed, whereupon the watches of their course clasped her pretty hands, while her cheeks grew a brighter crimson as, with sparkling violet eyes, she still watched. Down the stream onward float the two white blossoms, now close together with snowy petals entwined. But, alas, only for a short season!

Presently a large ripple, caused by the sudden plunging of a water-rat into the clear water, lifts them high up for a second. The next, and they are once again floating peacefully down the stream; but each goes on its way far removed from the other. Genuine tears start to the girl's eyes as she notes all, while she murmurs forth,

"Ah, can it be true that we shall but meet to part? But it may not be for ever. I will watch still."

Throwing away the rest of the flowers, she continued her way; but when a firm tread was made audible on the wooden plank, she became aware that she was no longer alone.

Then, drawing herself up and turning hastily, she confronted the very man whose fate, mingled with her own, she had been so anxiously tasting for the last ten minutes! Yes, there he stood, not three paces from her, with extended hands, a pleased expression on his handsome face and in his clear grey eyes. He was the first to speak,

"This is, indeed, a pleasure to me, Miss Butler! I only returned last evening, and already I have the opportunity to renew our pleasant acquaintance."

"I heard that you—at least, Aunt Susan was saying at tea-time that she had heard you had returned, Mr. Leigh," replied the girl, as she stooped to take her flowers from the ledge whereon they had been resting. At the same time she gave a wistful glance down the stream where floated the fair white petals. Her companion noted the glance.

"There are no forget-me-nots on these banks, Miss Butler. I searched well last evening for some, but was unsuccessful. I wanted a few blossoms very particularly to send to a lady friend of mine."

The girl glanced up quickly; then, as if afraid

she had betrayed herself, she turned slightly away, and remarked,—

"Your friend will be disappointed, Mr. Leigh. Why not send her some daisies instead. There are plenty of them growing in the meadows, and they are very pretty."

As she spoke she bent her head lovingly and caressingly over the pure white petals, which she had picked up again while they were speaking. Her companion smiled as he listened to her words, but the smile was accompanied by a wistful, tender, eager light from his grey eyes. Both smile and look, however, were unperceived by Poppy Butler.

"Ah, what a good idea, Miss Butler!" he exclaimed. "I believe my friend likes all flowers, so that it will be immortal to her whether they are simple daisies or blue-eyed forget-me-nots. You say they grow in the meadows—the daisies I mean. Now, I am in a great hurry, and might not have time to gather them myself; but I suppose I am taking too great a liberty in asking such a favour—and perhaps you want these for yourself?"

Again the smile, again the wistful, eager look in Ernest Landon's eyes as he lowered his head towards the fair, golden one before him.

"I have gathered these for my aunt's room," Poppy replied a little sharply, then turned away with one more wistful glance down the river, and prepared to continue her way.

Tears were not far off. The deep violet eyes and the golden head drooped slightly as the girl eyed her flowers and walked slowly on, wondering whether he would ever forgive her for her rudeness in thus leaving him without the faintest farewell. But she was not long left to wonderment. With hasty steps Ernest Leigh followed, and soon overtook the slight figure.

"Miss Butler, I hope I have not offended you!"

"Certainly not, Mr. Leigh; only I am in a hurry. Good evening."

"Good evening, Miss Butler."

Then he turned and left her.

"He will never care for me more after this," the girl told herself, as she wended her way through the cornfields. "The daisies told the truth, after all, and now all is over, and I wish—I wish!"

And then the tears rolled quickly down the pretty face as Poppy Butler sank down amid the golden corn and scarlet poppies, and gave herself up to the indulgence of a good fit of weeping. And none passed by or heeded her, save a little field-mouse which had its nest near by, and which, coming across the big "white" thing in its path, surveyed it with its bright little eyes for a few seconds, and then quickly took refuge up a well-laden corn-stalk.

The sun's rays became more and more oblique. A breeze sprang up out of the west, and swayed the golden ears and ruddy poppies to and fro, and then Poppy Butler rose from the place where she had thrown herself down half-an-hour previously, and, taking off her hat, adjusted her sunny hair and smoothed down her crumpled skirt.

"Now for the poppies!" she exclaimed, and began plucking a goodly handful as they swayed to and fro in the evening breeze; and then, with red and white blossoms in both hands, she returned slowly and thoughtfully towards Brook-dean Farm.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Adeline."

"Yes, Sirey."

It was the name she had given the baronet when first she came to Leigh Towers, when a wee child of four years only, with pretty, lisping tongue, and the name had always been retained by her—at Sir Francis's wish.

Months had passed since that stormy scene between father and son, and since the interview between Adeline Merton and Ernest Landon, when he had rejected the passionate love she had offered him—unmasked.

Months had passed, and many changes had taken place at Leigh Towers. But the greatest and most noticeable had to do with the baronet himself.

Since that day when he had stood in the leaf-

less avenue and pointed out to his son the life that he so fondly hoped would be that son's by his marriage with their fair owner, Sir Francis had strangely altered.

From a strong, upright man, he had become bent and aged-looking, taking no interest in field-sports, or, in fact, any outdoor exercise. Carrying only to sit and wile away the hours in the grand old library amid the brown-covered volumes, gathered there by his forefathers.

And Adeline Merton was his constant companion, and devoted herself to the fulfilling his every whim and wish.

Strange it seemed that one so highly gifted and so keenly alive to the appreciation of the pleasures and charms of society, should thus voluntarily neglect, for the time, all the bright accessories of wealth, youth, and beauty, and thus spend hour after hour in the quiet and monotonous companionship of a man for whom the gay scenes of this world were as a thing of the past.

But, strange as it might be, Adeline Merton was a constant and devoted attendant upon the failing baronet.

But to return. The two were sitting in the twilight in the old library. Sir Francis was in his favourite spacious leather chair in the recesses of the bay window; while, a little removed, sat Adeline Merton in a low rocking-chair.

"Adeline, I have wanted to ask you for some time past if you have ever heard from him!"

A flush rose to Adeline Merton's face, while her fingers turned rapidly the leaves of the book from which she had just been reading.

"Never, Sirey," she replied.

"Ah!"

The exclamation was fraught with sadness.

"Why should he write, Sirey?"

"I thought perhaps he might have reconsidered his decision, Adeline. That is all," weakly replied the baronet.

A longing was in the tone—a longing which was reflected in the girl's face as she listened.

"I do not think he will ever alter his determination, Sirey. But I can't think the reason—unless—"

"Unless what?" sharply questioned Sir Francis.

"Unless he has met some one else whom he loves, Sirey."

"Ah! I had thought the same, Adeline. But, oh, child! it seems hard that mother and daughter should both suffer—both suffer from a misplaced affection!"

"Tell me more, Sirey."

The girl spoke calmly and quietly, as she drew still nearer and seated herself at the baronet's feet.

"Adeline, it is a sad, sad tale; but better tell it you now, or it may be too late. Adeline, have you never wondered why I have always shown you such great affection, and why I had driven from my home my only child?"

"I thought—but no, Sirey! you couldn't treat him so, simply for that," replied the girl.

"Simply for what, Adeline?"

"Because he failed to wed me when you so wished it, Sirey," came the low-spoken response.

"You are right in your conjectures, Adeline. But do you know the reason why I so earnestly desired a marriage between you two? Listen, and I will tell you. I was but five-and-twenty when I married; married, at my parents' wishes, a woman whom I had met but little; but then she was wealthy, and the heiress of all this."

Here the baronet stretched his thin, white hand out towards the distant scene of woods and rich lands.

"So we were married and returned home after the usual honeymoon. My wife and I went much into society; and it was at a ball given by a county magnate, in honour of my bride, that I learnt what a mistake my marriage was. A life-long mistake! Adeline, listen! Your mother and I met but seldom after that night, but the mischief had been wrought, all too surely. We loved each other! My child, there was no sin in it! I spoke no words to her that my own wife might not have heard, and she was silent too. Five years later I heard of her marriage with an old man rich as Croesus, but I know there was no

love in the match. Then I heard no more of her—my only love—till another five years, when you arrived at Leigh Towers, bringing with you a letter containing her latest words. Her husband had died when you were but a few months old; when she felt her end approaching she named me your guardian and her executor, and begged me to take care of you for old acquaintance sake. Still, no words of love were written; but I know well that she thought more of me in her dying hours. Now you know, child, why I have quarrelled with and driven from his home my only child! Adeline! I loved him; but I love more the child of the only woman who was ever dear to me! Tear, child, will do no good! I have ever done my best for you, and it is hard that your happiness should thus be ruined as your poor mother's."

"Oh, Srey!" exclaimed the girl. "I care not if you will still remain with me and love me!"

"Adeline, that cannot be; I am failing fast. Yes, child, it is the truth! But before I go I must see Jackson and alter my will."

"Srey, may I ask you one question?"

"What is it, Adeline?"

"Will he inherit all this?"

A hurried movement of the small hand towards the distant landscape.

"Inherit it! ha! never!" replied the honest, bringing down his hand with a heavy thud upon the leather elbow of his chair.

"Poor Ernest!" almost whispered the girl. So low—so unconscious of her companion—she was startled when she found that her words had been overheard.

"Adeline, do not show me or tell me that you pity him. You! why it is on account of that he has left all. Oh, Adeline, Adeline!"

The girl's beautiful brown eyes sparkled brightly as she glanced up into the face of her companion.

"Srey," she said, gently but firmly, "I forgot myself for the moment. Do not be alarmed, I do not really pity him."

"Ah! that is right."

"No, I do not really pity him," continued the girl, while the fire in her dark eyes was brighter than before; "and some day, perhaps, he will be sorry that he has thus slighted and spurned me!"

The young head was raised, while the full, red lips closed firmly, as though their owner were quite determined.

"Adeline, get pen and paper and write to Jackson at once. I do not feel quite as well as usual, and he must not come too late. I shouldn't rest easy in my grave if I thought he were in possession here."

Adeline Merton rose slowly, and crossing the room seated herself before a davenport, and hurriedly dashed off a few lines.

"I have finished, Srey."

"That's right. Now ring and have it posted at once; at once, or it may be too late!"

The letter despatched, Adeline returned to her low chair, but a faint sigh broke from her as she resumed it.

"He may return and promise obedience to his father's wishes before then," she thought.

The sigh was for him. It seemed so sad that he should be thus disinherited.

Ab, well! She loved him so well—after a fashion!—so well that she had set aside all pride and sought that last interview with him when she had heard from his own lips that—

Well! she would forgive him if he came again in penitence.

And if not?

Or, if he were again but to speak of his love for another—then, she told herself, she would not brook it! Not such love as hers would then turn to bitter hatred; and revenge must follow, sure and swift!

Yes; let him beware!

Such thoughts as these passed swiftly through her brain with no one near her save her guardian. Some far-off sound in the house roused her at last.

"Srey must have fallen asleep, he is so still," she murmured to herself as she raised her head and glanced up.

One look. Then she flew to the nearest bell and rang it hard and fast. Sir Francis, the owner of Leigh Towers, was lying back in his chair, unconscious and in a fit.

"Miss Butler, once again I am fortunate!"

"Mr. Leigh!"

"You are not surprised to see me?"

"Not very."

"I hope not. I know I ought not to have taken the liberty to send those few lines; but you will pardon my boldness, Miss Butler?"

"Certainly, Mr. Leigh."

Almost coldly spoken, but Ernest Leigh did not feel at all disheartened at the curt reply.

He was learning his lesson—was almost perfect in it; and did not mis-read the signs that spoke of the inward agitation experienced by the girl at his side.

The scene was the same as where he had once asked her for her flowers to send his friend; and she had been so pierced, so mortified; and yet she could scarcely tell why she had been so vexed, for no word of love had passed Ernest Leigh's lips, and she had no right to imagine, for an instant, that she was anything to him, save a mere acquaintance, whose tastes and feelings were in common with his, and therefore appreciated; but on the previous evening she had received a few brief words from Ernest Leigh—a few words brought her by one of her aunt's carter-boys, who had grimed from ear to ear as he gave the same to "Miss Poppy," and told her how that the gentleman who was staying at the inn had given it him, as he was coming across the "Home Meadow."

And Poppy Butler had received the same with hot, burning blushes flooding her fair face, and had opened the little twisted note with hasty and trembling fingers, as soon as she had dismissed the messenger.

Only a few words asking her to be at the bridge on the following evening; and then the signature in a bold and manly hand. And without considering the step at all in its light of right or wrong, Poppy Butler had pressed the senseless paper to her lips, and had vowed that she would be there. And now she was standing on the planks of the narrow bridge, standing with knots of poppies and daisies at her throat, and with downcast face and changing colour, waiting for—

And meanwhile she gave short and almost cold replies to the man at whose bidding she had come forth to meet him at the appointed tryst.

And Ernest Leigh?

It was not for a mere half-an-hour's pleasant chat with his fair companion that he had begged her thus to meet him.

"Miss Butler—Poppy!"

The girl started as the name fell from the stranger's lips, while a whole flood of crimson dyed her face and neck.

Ernest Leigh drew nearer still and gently took within his the little gloved hand lying loosely at her side.

No fear of being interrupted by a casual passer-by.

The place was pretty and picturesque enough to tempt many an owner; but, as Ernest Leigh well knew, when he neared the spot, but few cared to resort thither towards eventide. For it was the scene of one of the traditions of the sweet village.

Leading as it did to the neighbouring park, here, on the river was supposed to be seen playing in the clear moonlight nights the ghost of a little child with fair hair stretching down her back—a little child of only a few short years. A lady visitor at Mildmay Park had, some years previously, brought her only little girl with her, and the child was accompanied by its nurse—a woman with shifting eyes and strange manner.

One evening, towards the middle of July, the two—the child and her nurse—were seen walking through the park in the direction of the bridge, and from that night nothing had since been heard of nurse or child.

Various were the rumours afloat respecting their fate; but the commonest was that both had perished 'neath the waters; and, as I have

before mentioned, many affirmed that the figure of the child was to be seen, on clear moonlight nights, playing round the river banks. A few of the older ones of the village shook their heads at this report, and spoke of the gipsy encampment that had been broken up the very night the child was lost. But to return.

Ernest Leigh, knowing all this, dreaded not any interruption from passers-by. But, taking the little hand in his, he drew closer to him the unresisting form, and bending his head to hers, murmured softly,—

"Miss Butler—Poppy. I have asked you to meet me here this evening to tell you that I am going away."

"Going away, Mr. Leigh?"

"Yes, Poppy, going away."

"When?" in very faint tones.

"To-morrow morning—very early."

"I am very sorry," in still fainter tones.

"Really sorry, Poppy!"

"Yes," spoken so low that Ernest Leigh had great difficulty in catching the little affirmative. But the blushing face and drooping form told him all he wanted to know. "I am glad you are sorry, Poppy. Very glad. For now I know you will welcome me all the more when I return."

"Oh, Mr. Leigh, you will return!"

"Would you miss me very much if I did not, Poppy?"

"Yes."

A short sigh and a shiver as Poppy Butler realised what his last words really implied.

Never return! And she loved him so!

"Do not be afraid, my darling; I must call you so, for I love you so dearly, Poppy! I will return, and when I come again it will not be long before I hope to steal my darling from dear, quiet Bourton and transplanting Poppy to my own home. Will she be ready to come!—and willing!"

No reply, only a sweet, sweet smile irradiating the fair face.

"Answer me, darling please. Let me hear from your lips that my love is returned."

"Mr. Leigh, I do love you," murmured the girl, glancing up with flushed face and dewy violet eyes, into the handsome face, so near—so very near—her own!

"Not Mr. Leigh, darling!"

"Ernest, I do love you."

"Then it is all settled, Poppy. Now I will tell you why I must leave you—for a short time at least."

A troubled look crossed the girl's face at his last words. He had noticed it, and continued, whilst his grasp of the small hand grew firmer and closer,—

"My darling, do not grieve because I leave you for a short time. You will trust me still, will you not, Poppy?"

"I shall always trust you, Ernest."

"And I you, Poppy. A few weeks, and I shall again be with you, and then we will tell Aunt Susan all about it, and ask her consent."

And then fell one of those delicious silences, so delicious to the lovers who have just spoken the words to one another. A silence and a pause which such lovers do not find irksome, for—

"Ernest, why must you go away?"

"Ah! I was forgetting. To-day I received a letter from my father's solicitor—a letter containing bad news, Poppy; indeed, terrible to me, for my father and I parted in anger."

Ernest Leigh paused a moment to recover himself, as he thought of the scene when last he and his father had met.

"Is he dead, Ernest dear?" almost whispered the girl, as a look of sadness crossed her bright face.

"Yes, darling, he is dead, and I go tomorrow to be present on the following day at his funeral."

A low, quick sob broke from Poppy Butler.

"Poppy, my darling, what is it?" anxiously inquired her lover, as he bent his lips and laid them on hers.

"Oh Ernest, Ernest! my darling, I wish you would not leave me!" broke from the girl, as she leant her fair head against Ernest Leigh's encircling arm.

"Poppy, my darling, don't grieve so."

only for a short time, and I would not leave you at all, darling, were I not really obliged to do so. But business calls me, and I must go. I have so much to tell you when I return. You must meet me here the evening I return, Poppy, and then, together, we will go to Brookdeane Farm, and ask Aunt Susan's consent. My dear one, will you trust me till then?"

"I shall always trust you, Ernest dear, but I wish you were not leaving me."

"Why, Poppy! Surely you are not fancying that I shall not return?"

"I know you will if you can dear; but—"

"But I am sure I shall, Poppy."

Another silence; another pause.

"Ernest, where is your home?"

"Ah!" gaily replied the young man, "that is my secret, Poppy, and a secret that I shall not be at liberty to divulge until my return. But my darling will trust me in that also, I feel sure, when I tell her that it is my great wish that she will wait for her answer awhile. Is it not so, Poppy?"

"I am content to wait, Ernest," was the simple reply.

"And my darling shall not have long to wait. As I said before, a few short weeks and all will be explained, and we shall both be looking forward to our new home. As for my little Poppy's people, I do not wish to know more about them than she cares to tell me, and I am quite content in knowing dear 'Aunt Susan'."

"Ah, Ernest, I forgot!" exclaimed the girl, excitedly, as she strove to disengage herself from the protecting arm.

"Forgot what, my darling?" anxiously asked Ernest Leigh, glancing down with proud and happy look upon his companion.

"Forgot that I had not told you that I possess no relations. Aunt Susan told me all about it the very day that I first saw you——"

"Ah, how well I remember that day, Poppy!" broke in her lover.

"Yes; that night Aunt Susan told me all; all that she knew, at least."

"And what was it, darling?"

"That I am not really her niece, only her adopted niece. For it seems I was left just inside the garden gate one night in February, about twelve or thirteen years ago. Aunt Susan found me there the next morning. I was half dead with cold and hunger. She took me in, and then, for weeks, Aunt Susan says I was ill with a fever, and when I recovered I had forgotten everything about my past life. Of course, I was but very young, but still I did not remember anything of the people I had been with."

Poppy Butler paused, and glanced anxiously up into Ernest Leigh's face to note the effect her history produced.

"Poor little Poppy! And that is all you know of yourself, my darling?"

"Yes, Ernest."

"Ah! I had thought there was no true relationship between you and the mistress of Brookdeane Farm. Much as I respect Mrs. Butler, your adopted aunt, still I have always seen and noted the great difference existing betwixt aunt and niece."

"Dear Aunt Susan, how I love her!" exclaimed the girl.

"Yes, darling, I dare say you do. But some day, Poppy, your own friends will come forward and claim you. Later on, when you are my wife, Poppy, we may meet them in that society which will be so different from anything you have ever experienced, my darling."

"Yes, that would be nice," murmured the girl, glancing down into the quickly flowing water, with a soft, dreamy look in her beautiful eyes.

"Ah, Poppy, it will all come true, darling, believe me, when—but I must not let out my secret!" broke off Ernest Leigh, with laughing eyes and contented look.

"But, Ernest dear, are you content to take me now that you know my story?" asked the girl.

"My darling! Surely you could not doubt me for an instant!" was Ernest's eager response. A sigh of satisfaction escaped his companion.

"Poppy," her lover continued, "I have known

you now for some months, and I am quite willing to take you with your parentage and your former life shrouded, as it is, in a mystery, for I feel sure your friends will come forward to claim you some day, and those friends will be among the aristocracy of the land. I am sure of it, darling! Meanwhile I ask you for your love and trust, darling, and then we must wait for all the mystery to be unveiled. Are you willing, Poppy?"

"Ernest dear, you have my entire trust, and love now and for always," earnestly responded the girl.

And then, as the first silver stars appeared in the opal-hued sky, their lips met in one long, passionate kiss. Then along, and arm in-arm, Ernest Leigh and Poppy Butler wended their way back to Brookdeane Farm.

Sweet and many were the protestations of love and faith interchanged as the lovers passed on their way through the dewy meadows and corn-field, rich with its thousand golden ears, where the poppies were hanging their dew-laden heads, and nodding, even as they slept, in the gentle evening breeze.

"Poppy, once I asked you for your flowers, and I was refused them," murmured Ernest Leigh, as they were half across the field.

A quick, gushing look from the violet eyes was Poppy Butler's only response. Her companion understood the look, and hastened to explain.

"Ah, Poppy, you did not really believe that evening that I wanted your flowers for another than myself?"

"Ah, it was not true, then!"

"True! Of course not, dear! I was only telling my little Poppy, and her answer, and never told me that I was not wrong in supposing that she would yet learn to love me."

"Ah, if I had but known then; but it does not matter now. It only showed me how I loved you, Ernest."

"My darling, now I am going once more to ask you for your flowers, and I feel sure that this time they will not be refused me. Can you spare them, darling? I shall value them. They will speak to me of my darling during the next few weeks that we must be parted. Not that I shall require anything to remind me of my darling."

"But, Ernest, these are fading fast. I will pick some more."

"No, no, Poppy, let me have those that you are wearing. They will be sweeter and dearer to me since my love has worn them."

With smiling face Poppy Butler unfastened the knot of simple wild-flowers, and gave them to her lover.

"Thank you, my darling," he whispered, as he received them. "I shall keep these in safety till we meet again."

"You promise, Ernest."

"I promise, Poppy, and I will keep my promise. When we meet next I will give you back your flowers, and you must give me what I value much more—a kiss from your own pretty sweet lips. So that's an agreement, Poppy!"

"Yes, Ernest!"

But now the garden gate was reached, and a distant clock struck the half-hour.

"Half-past nine!" exclaimed the girl. "What will Aunt Susan say? I must be going, Ernest."

"Then good-bye, my darling, till we meet again. I shall not write to you, Poppy, as it might only bring you trouble, as Aunt Susan is still in ignorance of our present relationship. But the time will seem short, I hope; and then, my love, we shall meet once more!"

One long passionate kiss and then Ernest Leigh and Poppy Butler parted from one another; the one to return through the daisy meads and golden corn-fields to the little inn—his present home; the other to steal with light steps through the open door, and on upstairs into her pretty bedroom to lay aside her hat.

Later on Poppy Butler's small head, with its golden tresses, tossed restlessly to and fro on the white pillow in the moonlight; while the pretty lips unclosed every now and then as their owner murmured.—

"Oh! Ernest, Ernest, I wish you would not

leave me. What if you should not return to me!"

And then the tears came for a time. Finally tired nature had her own way, and golden-crowned head and fair lips were still at last.

Lady Lennox and her friend, Mrs. Mildmay, were sitting on the lawn at Mildmay Park. The afternoon was bright and warm, or rather hot—such weather as comes in August.

Silence fell between the friends for a brief space—a silence broken by the hostess, as she said, softly, and with gentle caress of her friend's hand, which she had taken,—

"Julia I thought, perhaps, you had forgotten."

"I never could forget, Grace! The scene, and its remembrance, are as fresh as ever in my memory. My poor child!"

"But, Julia dear!" contended Mrs. Mildmay, "surely you do not think that our pretty village belle is—

"Yes; I believe she is my long-lost child, and about to be restored to me, Grace!" exclaimed Lady Lennox, rising hastily from her low garden-seat, and speaking excitedly, while her eyes again filled with tears—eyes just such as were the girl's of whom they spoke.

"Well, dear," replied Mrs. Mildmay, "I will call with you to-morrow morning if you like, and we can then see and speak with Poppy, and also hear afresh Mrs. Butler's tale respecting her."

"Why not go to-day, Grace?"

"I cannot, dear, unfortunately, since we have people coming to dinner; but I will go the first thing-tomorrow morning."

"Thank you, dear Grace," responded Lady Lennox, as she stooped and kissed her friend's cheek; then added, cheerfully, "Ah! I forget! My old friend, Hugo Ralston, dines here to-night, and he had promised me an hour's chat over old times, as we row up and down the stream, in the full blaze of the August moor."

"How I envy you, Julia! And I must sit quite still in my drawing-room, and make myself agreeable to all these country parsons and their fat, sober wives. Ah, well! the longest and dullest dinner-party must have an end! So I will be patient. Now let us stroll along to the conservatory, and choose our flowers wherewith to create living feelings in the bosoms of our more staid country neighbours, as they compare our stylish costumes with their own gowns of country texture and home manufacture."

Several hours later and Lady Lennox was treading the small path leading down to the boathouse. With one hand she lifted daintily her rich silken skirts from the dewy grass, while with the other she held under her chin the crimson Cashmere wraps she had thrown over her dark head.

"What a splendid night for our chat by moonlight, Lady Lennox!" exclaimed the man who was accompanying her, as the pair turned a sudden corner, and the pretty stream appeared in sight, its waters rippling musically 'neath the silvery rays of the round moor.

"Glorious!" his companion replied, as she stopped for a moment to admire the scene.

"Ah, and here is the boat!" Hugo Ralston continued, as he peered round the corner of the small boathouse.

Ten minutes later and the two—Lady Lennox and Hugo Ralston—were floating down the stream, floating down towards the small wooden bridge before mentioned. A sigh broke from the former as they neared the spot.

"Lady Lennox, shall I turn the boat?" quietly asked Hugo Ralston, for he knew well the sad story which was now ripe in his companion's brain.

No audible reply—nothing save a faint shake of the crimson-covered head. And Hugo Ralston again applied himself to his oars, and onward the little boat skimmed.

"Dear Lady Lennox, let us turn back if it so distresses you!" again broke forth the man's voice, in low, tender tones, as a sob succeeded to the sigh.

"No, no! Hugo! Let us go further on!" muttered Lady Lennox. "It is over now, Hugo.

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I could not help remembering it all just then. "We were at the exact spot, Hugo!"

"Poor little Poppy!" murmured Hugo Ralston, as he leaned awhile on his oar, and gazed thoughtfully, in turn, at the banks on either side. "And you have never heard more, dear Lady Lennox?"

"Never, Hugo!"

"She may yet be restored to you."

"May be. Still, I do not feel so certain that she perished in the water, Hugo?"

"No, Lady Lennox!"

"No, Hugo. I will tell you my secret. I believe my daughter still lives, and that she is not far distant from me."

"Ah, that is good news!" joyously exclaimed Hugo Ralston.

"Yes, Hugo. I believe I saw her yesterday, and not far from this spot. She was leaning against the trunk of one of these old willows. Her hat was off, and I fancied I detected the very mark, just over the left eye, that— But, Hugo, what is that?"

Lady Lennox rose and pointed with her fair hand towards a large and bant willow upon the left bank, about a yard from the little wooden bridge. The light boat rocked and swayed for an instant. Then, even as Hugo Ralston's lips opened to question further, a something, being the outline of a human figure, was seen clearly in the bright moonlight, seated on the bent willow, seated just where its branches drooped over and kissed the waters. Seen for an instant only! Then, with a dull groan, the figure dropped downward from its insecure perch, and the bright rippling waters closed over it.

A slight scream and an exclamation followed from the occupants of the boat. Then Hugo Ralston watched eagerly for the reappearance of the faintest speck of white upon the waters.

It came after a few seconds; and then hastily divesting himself of hat and coat, he sprang over the boat's edge, and plunged into the moonlit water.

"Save her, Hugo! Save her!" cried Lady Lennox, in piercing tones, as she stood with clasped hands and eager-strained eyes, watching the floating white object.

A few minutes later, and the same was laid, dripping and motionless, at the bottom of the small boat; while uplifting the pretty face, with its closed eyelids, and peering into the same face with an intense anxiousness and eagerness was Lady Lennox.

"Hugo, you have saved my child! How can I thank you?" the latter whispered, as her deep violet eyes, full of a great gratitude, were fastened on her companion.

"Your child, Lady Lennox!" echoed the man in astonishment.

"Yes," she replied, "my own sweet child! Ay, I should know her among a thousand by this."

Her fingers pointed to a small mark—scarcely noticeable to a stranger—upon the white face of the unconscious girl at her feet.

"Dear Lady Lennox, I congratulate you most sincerely," replied Hugo Ralston.

Then ejaculated, as his gaze fell upon the fair, sweet oval face, framed with its cloud of fair hair,

"How lovely! Oh! you ask me how I can be rewarded. I will not reply to that question now, as I think it most advisable that I use all speed to run the boat back to the landing-place and fetch assistance. But one day, dear Lady Lennox, I may remind you of your words. Now for home."

A few rapid strokes from Hugo Ralston's powerful arms, and the small craft shot down the stream, and soon was at the landing-stage.

Half-an-hour later, and Poppy Butler lay between the blankets in her own mother's room at Midway Park.

\* \* \* \* \*

"And now for my revenge!" mentally exulted Adeline Merton, as she laid down the letter she had been perusing at her breakfast-table in her Kensington home, and carried it away, with others, to her morning-room.

Mrs. Moles, her companion, was absent in deep consultation with the housekeeper.

"Yes! now for my revenge!" continued Adeline, as she settled herself before her devonport. "Let me first read again the letter. Really, Bates writes a very good hand, and the spelling is not so much amiss, considering she is but a maid. Now then, let me see."

Adeline Merton drew forth once again the letter from its envelope, and, after glancing lightly at the first page, turned over, and read in a low tone the following:

"I have found out everything that you want to know, miss. The young girl is very pretty indeed, and I am sure I could not wonder or be surprised at young master's falling in love with her, if there was not some one else who had ought to be his wife. You must excuse my saying it out plainly, miss; but, of course, all of us in the servants' hall have talked it over many a time. Well, young master did not give his real name, not even to this young girl; for one day I met her, and I asked her if she could tell me anything about a 'Mr. Leigh,' who had been staying at the inn. And she knew the name at once, and said he was gone away, but that he was coming back again. I laughed to myself when I heard that, for I thought my dear mistress would do her best to stop that little affair. I should if he were my young man. And now, dear and honoured miss, when am I to send to—"

"There! That's quite enough of that. And now one look at the address, and the girl's name, and then your letter, Miss Bates, can be put in the fire, and so will never rise up as witness against me. Your tongue will be quite silenced when you see the dresses I have put aside for you."

Adeline laid the letter down before her, and, taking an envelope and paper, traced in a bold, manly hand the address before her.

"Now, let me compare the writings. Ah! very good—would quite pass for Ernest's," she continued, as she surveyed critically and compared the writing before her with some other she drew from her pocket.

Then, letting both papers slip from her hold, she leant back in her chair, and gave herself up to thought. So deep were her thoughts that she started quickly when a voice broke the stillness of the room.

"Miss Merton, I am afraid I am disturbing you—you look and seem so engrossed with your own thoughts!"

"What is it, Mrs. Moles?"

"I am not come to hinder you. I only brought the paper in; I had taken it to my own room for a few minutes to copy the address of some housemaid whom I think may suit you. I hope you haven't wanted the paper, Miss Merton?"

"Not at all, Mrs. Moles. You can put it down there. I can't attend to it just at present, as I have some important writing to attend to."

"Very well, Miss Merton. I shall be in the housekeeper's room should you require me," replied Mrs. Moles, as she turned to quit the room.

Adeline simply bowed her head in response; and then the door closed, and she was once again alone with her thoughts.

"How can I have my revenge!" she murmured, glancing at the directed envelope before her. "What tone shall it take? A direct falsehood will be useless, if he is really returning again. No! It must be something more conclusive than that. Dear me, I can't think of it now; I will see what is in the paper first."

Stretching forth her hand she took the newspaper from the small table where Mrs. Moles had laid it, and then opening it ran her eyes down the list of "Deaths, Births, and Marriages." Suddenly her whole face cleared, and with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes she turned again to her devonport, took from it a sheet of note-paper, then taking up a pair of scissors from a neighbouring table, she proceeded to cut out a slip from the list of marriages.

"How fortunate that he should have used that name!" she murmured softly, sticking the little slips containing the few printed words to the clean sheet of paper by the aid of a little gum. "Now, Miss Poppy, we shall see who wins

—you or I. Even if you win in the end I shall be satisfied, for I am sure many a day of sorrow is before you ere you again hold sweet converse with your lover! Now repeat it at once, lest my conscience should win the day."

Rising with a triumphant, not cruel, smile on her face, Adeline Merton repaired to her own room, taking with her the letters she had received that morn, and also the one she intended posting.

"Ah! if I did not love him so much!" she sighed, later on, as she sat 'neath the trees in the garden, and listened, carelessly and indifferently, to the soft tones and gentle words of a certain "Jack Holt," a handsome man as one could well wish to bask in woman's smiles.

But he was not the one Adeline Merton desired. There lay the secret bitterness, which only her heart knew of.

"Ah! Mrs. Butler, how are you?"

The mistress of Brookdale Farm started, and then glanced up from the cuttings she was taking from the late-blooming geraniums in her small front-garden.

"Mr. Leigh!" she exclaimed, dropping the flower-pot she held in her hand with a crash.

"Yes, Mrs. Butler. You seem very surprised to see me."

"Ah, well, I may be surprised at the smallest event now," sententiously replied the good woman, as she set about to collect the pieces of the broken flower-pot.

"Can I help you with those pieces, Mrs. Butler, since it was owing to me that the pot got broken?"

"Oh, no! I may just as well do it myself. I never get any help from anyone nowadays, but it does not matter. I am getting old, and shall not last much longer, perhaps."

Ernest Leigh looked on in astonishment. Could this be the Mrs. Butler whom he had left so cheerful and so pleasant, as he had always found her before? What had changed her thus?

"Ah! perhaps she had thought he had played Poppy false! Yes, she must have guessed how he loved her; and then, when no news of him had come she must have suspected him of playing her niece false!

"Poor dear old soul!" he ejaculated, inwardly. "That's what's the matter with her." Then aloud, "I thought I caught a glimpse of your niece in the distance as I walked up here, Mrs. Butler. I hope she is well."

"Who did you say, Mr. Leigh?" asked the old lady, turning round upon him quickly, and speaking in a high and excited voice.

"Your niece, Mrs. Butler—Miss Poppy!" and then as the dear familiar name left his lips his companion gasped forth with a sob—

"Oh, please, do not mention that name!" And then the good old lady drew forth her handkerchief and burst into tears.

Ernest Leigh stood lost in amazement; but his anxiety was too great to let him remain patiently by while his companion indulged freely in her sorrow, whatever it might be.

"Dear Mrs. Butler, what has happened? Do not keep me in suspense, but tell me all! If you only knew how interested I am in Miss Poppy's welfare—"

"You interested, Mr. Leigh?"

"Very much so, Mrs. Butler."

"Then I am very sorry for you, Mr. Leigh, for I do not believe you will ever meet her again. Nor I either," sobbed Mrs. Butler, turning away, and leading the way to the house.

Her visitor followed her as in a dream. Mechanically he trod the familiar path, and passed in through the open front door, and turned into the small parlour.

"Sit down, Mr. Leigh, please, and then I will tell you all."

Ernest Leigh obeyed, and after a preliminary wipe of her eyes Mrs. Butler began her tale.

"It was about three weeks ago that one bright morn a letter came for my Poppy. I was at the door when the postman came, and so I took it in. I turned it over a good bit, for the address was in a gentleman's handwriting—a good, dashing hand; but the postmark were

so faint that I could not tell where it came from. I gave it to Poppy when she came down, and asked her who it was from; but she only got very red, and said she did not know till she opened it. I said no more then, and as I was busy all that day I quite forgot to ask her about it again. That evening I went down into the village and called in to see old Mrs. Troke, and, as she so pressed me, I stayed to supper with her. About half-past nine I came home, and found Poppy was out. Jane told me she thought she had gone down to the little bridge (for she was always down there), so I thought I would go down and meet her. I did not like her being out so late by herself. It was a beautiful bright moonlight night, and the river looked pretty-like in the distance. I had just set one foot on the bridge when I heard a splash, and then a scream. I rushed on, and there below I saw—"

"Poor Mrs. Butler! Her feelings were too great for her, and again she broke into tears.

"Saw what, Mrs. Butler?"

No answer, but sob.

"For Heaven's sake!" broke in again her visitor, "do not keep me thus in suspense!"

"Oh, Mr. Leigh! did you love my Poppy?"

"Love her—I should think so!"

"Oh, dear—oh, dear! How sorry you will be then to hear—"

"Tell me the worst at once! She can't be dead, or—"

"Dead! No, not quite so bad as that; but she is lost to me, and I am afraid to you too, Mr. Leigh."

"How!"

"Well, you see, I came on the bridge just as she fell into the water. She had been sitting on the trunk of one of those old willows, and somehow she slipped off."

"And who saved her?"

"A lady and a gentleman from the Park were rowing up the stream, and the gentleman jumped into the water and saved her!"

"And then?"

"Ah, Mr. Leigh, now comes the saddest part of all! The lady who was in the boat was my Poppy's mother."

"Poppy's mother!" exclaimed her listener, forgetting in his interest and excitement that he was using her Christian name.

"Yes, her own mother beyond a doubt; and—oh, dear! I ch, dear!—she has taken my Poppy away with her, and I shall never see her more."

"Cheer up, Mrs. Butler. I believe you will see her again, and that before very long."

"What do you mean, sir? Have you seen her since she left Bourton? Her mother told me she was going to take her on the Continent, whatever that may be."

"Gone abroad, eh?" mused Ernest Leigh, as he reflected for a few seconds. "Then I am afraid I shall not be able to bring her back to you for some time, Mrs. Butler. I must first find her for myself. You must know I am very vexed and very disappointed, Mrs. Butler, to find Miss Poppy gone, for I had returned here purposefully to ask your consent to Miss Poppy's becoming my wife."

"Your wife, Mr. Leigh?"

"Yes, my wife," smilingly replied the young man. "Why, do you think it so strange that I should love her?"

"Not at all, Mr. Leigh. Love her! Who could help it? But—"

"Well, speak out, Mrs. Butler, and tell me your objections."

"I have no objections, sir—none at all. I would willingly give my consent if that were all; but, sir, you must not be offended, but my Poppy's mother is a grand lady. Has a title too. Lady—Lady—I can't remember it exactly, and you will excuse me, sir, I am sure."

"Certainly, certainly, Mrs. Butler; I quite understand you. You do not think this proud lady would care for her daughter to wed with a comparatively poor man like myself—oh, Mrs. Butler!"

"Well, sir, if you will excuse my saying that—"

"No more excuses, Mrs. Butler. I have also my secret. I am not simply the 'Mr. Leigh' that you have been accustomed to consider me."

I also have a title, and am what the world considers a rich man; so I still hope to bring back your niece to see you when she is my wife."

"Well, to be sure!" said Mrs. Butler, dropping curtsey upon curtsey.

"Yes, Mrs. Butler, I have a very good chance, and I shall yet hope to succeed."

"Well, I am sure, sir, I hope you will."

"Thank you. Now I must be going, as I shall now return by the next train. Good-bye, Mrs. Butler."

"Good-bye, sir!" responded the mistress of Brookdale Farm, giving her deepest courtesy, and showed her visitor out to the door with the greatest ceremony.

"Now, to find my darling!" exclaimed Ernest Leigh, or Sir Ernest Leigh-Landon, as we must henceforth call him, as he settled himself comfortably in a corner of the first-class carriage, and was whirled away towards his home at Leigh Towers.

Not a shadow of doubt was there in his mind, only a feeling of sore disappointment that he had to wait yet awhile ere again seeing his darling—only that; but no shadow of doubt as to how she would receive him now that her position in life was so changed. Ah! would that some sprite from the fairy world could have brought him tidings respecting the cruelmissive dealt by a woman's hand, who harmed him so deeply that her love needed a deep revenge to enhance it.

"Poppy, you have made two people very happy indeed."

Poppy Lennox, as we must now call her, started slightly as the low, sweet tones fell on her ear—started slightly as she reclined lazily amid the soft cushions of her own prettily-furnished boudoir, while a shadow crossed her face, but no reply, no answering smile betokened that she had heard her mother's words.

"What I dreamt, Poppy! Ah! it is very excusable, considering the circumstances, and that Hugo has but just left you. My dear Poppy, I am so pleased!"

Lady Lennox crossed gracefully to where sat her daughter, and bending low laid her lips upon the pure white forehead round which curled, so profusely, the golden hair.

"I did it to please you, mamma," then spoke the girl, but there was no bright flush on her face as she spoke thus calmly of the important step in life that she had so lately sealed.

"Not to please me alone, my darling, I hope!"

"I could not refuse the man who had once saved my life, mamma! You once said that to me, and I have learnt the lesson well."

"My dear child, do not talk of your engagement to Hugo Ralston as a mere duty. Surely you have some love to give him, the man, besides a certain amount of gratitude!" echoed Lady Lennox, as she surveyed her daughter with flushed face.

"Love for Hugo Ralston!" echoed the girl, in low, far-off tones, which tones further increased her mother's annoyance and vexation.

"Poppy, child! what is the matter with you? You surely do not mean to insinuate by your manner that your heart has already been bestowed upon some one of the village rustics at Bourton?"

A deep flush suffused Poppy Lennox's face, then quickly faded away and left her very pale.

"Not a village rustic, mamma," she began, but the proud and haughty Belgravian mother would hear no further.

"That is quite sufficient, Poppy. A little *affaire de cœur* was all very well in such a quiet place as Bourton; but now, in your present position, you must forget all that, and be ready and willing to accept the man who considers even himself to be honoured with thus securing the hand and heart of the lovely daughter of Lady Lennox."

Saying Lady Lennox once again touched lightly her daughter's white forehead; then the door closed, and Poppy Lennox was alone—alone with her own thoughts.

She sat absorbed in these latter for some time after her mother had left her; then, rising, she

crossed the room, and advancing to a small table standing in a recess she seated herself before it, and pressing a small ivory knob at one side a secret drawer flew open.

It was empty save for one single envelope—an envelope that had been evidently torn open with hasty fingers, for the jagged and uneven edges testified to the same. Lifting the envelope from its resting-place, Poppy Lennox glanced slowly and steadily at the address thereon—and long at the characters in the bold, manly hand; then opened the envelope and drew forth a blank sheet of note-paper. It was folded in two.

Unfolding the same, Poppy sighed deeply as her gaze fell upon the small slip of printed paper fastened to the blank sheet; sighed deeply, whilst the tears gathered in her eyes, as she perused the few lines running thus:

"Leigh—Dyke—July 23<sup>rd</sup>, at St. Philip's, Dalton, Ernest Leigh, of Camborne, to Evelyn, daughter of John Dyke of Rainsford!"

This was all.

But the few lines were all-sufficient to cause the tears to flow fast and freely from Poppy Lennox's deep violet eyes.

This, then, was the reason of his deserting her—the reason why he had given her no explanation respecting the same absence. Ah! what had she done that he should thus have so-treated her—thus had been so false.

Still she loved him, and, loving him thus, was unwillingly brothoring herself to another. And yet she knew that other had some claim upon her love; for had he not saved her life?

As she remembered this she slowly and sadly replaced the sheet of paper within its covering, and restored both within the drawer.

The ivory knob was again in requisition, and then Poppy Lennox bent her arms sadly upon the devonport and gave way to her feelings.

Lights were gleaming from hall and window. Carriages lined thickly the road in front of Harlech House, the town residence of Lady Lennox.

The London season was at its height. On the wide staircase, making their way slowly to the reception rooms, were all the élite of aristocratic Belgravia—on their way to pay homage to Lady Lennox.

The latter stood in a small ante-room, and on her side was her lately-restored daughter, already the acknowledged belle of the London drawing-rooms.

Very handsome looked the hostess in her rich laces and sparkling diamonds. Very lovely was her fair daughter, as she received with a pretty, smiling face the congratulations showered upon her—distasteful as they were to her.

Closer by, and sharing those congratulations, was her betrothed, Hugo Ralston, a man of about forty-five, of tall figure and strikingly handsome appearance, but looking his age.

The rooms were filling fast, and Hugo Ralston, whispering to his bride-elect, suggested that they should adjourn to the conservatory awhile and seek a few minutes' relief from the extreme heat and crush.

Mechanically she acquiesced, and the two were soon seated 'neath the shadow of some towering pillars.

"Poppy, I can scarcely believe it to be reality when I reflect that but a few days ago—"

"Hugo, I wish you would bring me some coffee, please," interrupted his companion.

She smiled so sweetly as she spoke that Hugo Ralston forgave the interruption, and hurried away to do her bidding.

And then Poppy Lennox, believing herself to be quite hidden from observation, drew forth from the bosom of her dress a small packet—

Opening it with trembling fingers she drew forth a knot of withered flowers—nothing more! No line to tell of the sender. Nor did she need it.

Too well she remembered the place, the occasion, where and when the same flowers had passed from her possession into another's.

Kissing them tenderly, she laid her soft red lips on the brown, withered petals; then, hearing the approaching *frou frou* of a woman's skirt, she hurriedly returned the packet to its place of safety, and glanced up to see who was the intruder.

"Ah! Miss Lennox, I am indeed fortunate," rang out in the clear tones of Adeline Merton.

"I am pleased to meet you again, Miss Merton," replied our heroine, as she moved aside her auburn skirts to make way for Adeline Merton.

"Taunta! How delightfully cool it is here! I am waiting for any event to bring me some refreshment."

"And I also am in like position, Miss Merton, for—"

Poppy Lennox stopped short in her words, while the colour gradually faded from her cheeks.

"Miss Lennox, you are ill!" cried her companion, as she noted the sudden pallor.

"It is nothing, merely the heat. I shall be better presently, when Mr. Ralston brings my coffee. But who is that gentleman passing by the bank of heliotrope? There are so many here that are quite strangers to me."

"Oh! But I did not think Sir Ernest Landon was entirely a stranger to you, Miss Lennox? At least," Adeline Merton continued, as she secretly watched her companion's face, "I have often heard him speak of you."

"Speak of me, Miss Merton?"

"Yes, indeed. But then you both met each other under other names than those you now bear, so that that circumstance may account for it; and Ernest is sadly altered of late—seems so unlike his usual self."

"Other names?"

"Yes. Sir Ernest Landon was staying at Bourton as plain 'Ernest Leigh,' and you, Miss Lennox, were known to him as 'Miss Butler.'"

"Ernest Leigh!" gasped Adeline Merton's listener, with white eyes.

"Yes, Miss Lennox. A quarrel—domestic—obliged Sir Ernest to leave his home for a time, and he chose Bourton."

"And his wife—is she with him to-night?"

"His wife, Miss Lennox?"

"Yes."

"Sir Ernest Landon is not married, nor likely to be, from all I hear. Some other—But you are surely feeling faint, Miss Lennox? Ah, here comes Mr. Ralston. I can't leave you in better hands. I will stroll round in search of my escort, for I am fairly famished."

With smiling face, but cruel thoughts in her heart, Adeline Merton rose and left the girl she had so cruelly wronged sitting with fixed hands and bent head.

"I have had part of my revenge already," Adeline murmured to herself as she strolled away, amid the fair and fragrant flowers, in the direction lately taken by Sir Ernest Landon. "And but three days more, and she will be the wife of Hugo Ralston; and then, perhaps, when all hope is gone, he may—"

Here the beautiful brown eyes grew soft, as this woman thought of the man for whom she still entertained some sparks of the passion that had bred such bitter hate, and been the instigation of such cruel revenge.

\* \* \* \* \*

"A splendid morning for the hounds, Landon!" exclaimed Jack Holt to his friend and host, Sir Ernest Landon, as the latter crossed the lawn at Leigh Towers on his way to the breakfast-room after his usual morning's inspection of kennel and stable.

For the owner of Leigh Towers was still unmarried. Thus more than two years had sped since that bright summer evening when he had stood side by side on the little rustic bridge, and murmured his love-vows into the pretty pink ear of Poppy Butler.

But, shortly after the latter's marriage with Hugo Ralston, Sir Ernest had returned to Leigh Towers, and devoted himself thoroughly to field-sports. At present he had staying with him several men of college acquaintance, who were glad enough to get an invite for a few days' hunting with the Leigh Towers hounds.

Chief among the assembled company and most

intimate with the host was Jack Holt, a young man about the same age as Sir Ernest.

"Glorious morning, indeed, Jack! What a splendid run we shall have! Now, what do you say to some breakfast to fortify the finer man? We shall need it before our return."

So saying, Sir Ernest led the way to the breakfast-room, where were assembled the rest of his house party, all fully equipped for the forthcoming hunt. Nodding right and left Sir Ernest seated himself at the head of the table, and soon the room rang with the play of knives and forks, mingled with gay voices and hearty laughter.

Three hours later and Sir Ernest Landon was alone at the entrance to a narrow lane. The fox started that morning by his hands had proved a "game" one; all the horses and their riders had had hard work to follow Reynard. Over heavy, ploughed fields and through narrow, muddy lanes the hunt had sped, and then, just as the hounds were right upon their prey, the wily fox had run to earth.

A party of hangers-on was called in at once to assist in the unearthing; and in the meantime Sir Ernest had turned his horse's head, and walked the animal slowly away from the rest, for he wanted to be alone just then, and be alone with his thoughts—wanted to nerve himself for a great undertaking. And this?

A few months previously he had heard of the death of Hugo Ralston—her husband; and from the very moment the news arrived the old love revived, and the longing came back in full force to at once repair to her and ask for an explanation.

The news of her engagement to Hugo Ralston had been a severe shock to him, but his pride forbade his intruding. He denied that she, being ignorant of his real position in society, had done as many others might have done in her case—discarded the unpretentious suitor of the small village for the wealthy and well-known *habitus* of Belgravian circles.

The only intimation he had given her of his presence was the returning of the withered knot of flowers, delivered on the same night that he had purposely attended her mother's reception—attended it, vainly hoping that the sight of the wild flowers might cause a reaction in his favour.

That hope had been a delusive one. Now that she was free once again all his old hopes and longings returned; and as he walked his horse slowly along the muddy way he was, in fancy, going over the meeting which he was planning after his own design.

"She must return such love as I have given her," he murmured to himself, and a smile irradiated his face as he thought of the blissful moment when again he should hear the sweet words from her lips. "My own darling Poppy," he whispered full softly, "how I shall—"

"Ernest."

The interruption came from Adeline Merton, who, in mire-spattered habit, came down the lane, her fiery mare foaming and fretting to break away and be after the hounds once more, whose deep baying was heard in the distance.

"Adeline, you out to-day, and on Brunette again! Do you think it is wise?"

"Wise, Ernest! What does a broken neck signify to me?"

"Why, what has happened, Adeline, that you should thus be willing to give up all the fair things of this world?" good-temperedly asked Sir Ernest, bending slightly forward to lay his hand on the glossy neck of the spirited Brunette.

Adeline Merton glanced keenly at the handsome face, and for an instant there gleamed a look of tenderness—nay, love—in the beautiful brown eyes. Only for an instant. Then she broke forth again in harsh, cold tones,—

"I do not care for all the 'fair things' of this world, as you term them. They have all lost their fancies and charm for me, Ernest," she added, in a lower tone and sadly, glancing meanwhile at her companion's face.

The latter flushed slightly as he replied,—

"I am sorry for that, Adeline. You, so handsome, so wealthy, so—"

"You can't add 'so loved,' Ernest," interrupted Adeline Merton.

Her companion started slightly; then made reply,—

"So loved, Adeline!"

"By whom?" sternly and sharply asked.

"By one whom I admire and respect more than any man I know."

"Ah!"

"Yes, Adeline; I have not been asked to plead his suit. He hopes to do that soon for himself; but I should be more than pleased to see united two whom I believe are—"

"I believe you are talking great nonsense, Sir Ernest Landon."

The words were spoken so sweetly that their rudeness did not seem so offensive at first sound.

"Yes," continued the speaker, in her clear, sweet tones, "yes, Sir Ernest Landon—Ernest, you know full well that there is only one man upon this earth whom I would ever wed, and he— Ah, it is for his sake, because he will not wed me, that I care not whether I come to grief by my foolhardiness in riding a spirited horse or not."

Tears filled the beautiful brown eyes; the clear notes quivered slightly.

"Adeline, it can never be! But I hope yet to see you happy with my old friend Jack Holt. He has—"

"Say no more, Ernest. This is the last time I shall forget myself, and plead for love from a man who cares naught for me, though I would have given my life even for him! Farewell!"

So saying, and waving her dainty riding-whip aloft in the air, Adeline Merton brought it smartly down upon the mare's neck, and then

Ab, what a fearful sight met Sir Ernest Landon's gaze as, ten minutes later, he came upon the body of the fallen mare, and noted a few yards ahead the prostrate form of a woman! One glance at the face, so ashen-hued, and then Sir Ernest galloped off for assistance.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Ernest."

"Yes, Adeline."

"Ah, you have come, then, to hear my last confession?"

Sir Ernest bowed his head in silence as he stood with folded arms at the side of the bed, whereon lay the proud and beautiful Adeline Merton, never more to rise therefrom. Such was the case. The physician's fiat had gone forth; and no mortal skill could avail to heal the poor crushed lady.

"Ernest," once again in weak tones.

"Yes, Adeline."

"Sit down there."

He obeyed at once, and seated himself in the chair her glances betokened.

"Now, please, let us be alone for the last few moments of my life."

She was obeyed; and as the door closed on nurse and housekeeper (for she had been brought to Leigh Towers), the faint voice again broke forth.—

"Ernest, you will forgive me, and you will seal that forgiveness of binding with your lips, since you need not fear. She will never know unless you tell her."

"Tell me what it is that needs my forgiveness, Adeline," gently replied Sir Ernest.

"Ernest, had I not loved you so well I could never have acted as I have. And she has had to suffer; and I am sorry, now that I live here, and the end so near!"

"She has had to suffer, Adeline! You can't mean Pop—"

"Yes, yes, Poppy! that is her name! Poor little thing! And she thought you were married, and so she accepted Hugo Ralston, and pretended to have put aside all her great love for you. Yes, I know it all! and it was all my doing!"

"Tell me all, Adeline, please," gently said her listener; but his looks belied the tranquillity of his speech.

"Yes, I will tell you all. Only you must first promise to forgive me as I have asked you."

"I promise."

"Ernest, I have always loved you, but my love was a passion rather; and when I found

that you would rather endure exile than comply with your uncle's wishes, then, Ernest, I vowed revenge, and I have had it. I found out—no matter how—all about Poppy Butler—learnt of your promise to return, and asked her of her aunt; and then the thought of how I could be revenged upon you for the slight you had shown me recurred to me, and I acted upon it successfully. A few weeks after your quitting her I accidentally saw, in one of the daily papers, the account of a marriage between an 'Ernest Leigh' and a certain 'Evelyn Dyke.' I knew well—no matter how I gained all my information—that you were using those two names, before and I cut out the—you are listening, Ernest?"

"Yes, I am listening," came the answer, gently spoken; but the face is turned away, that the dying woman might not be disturbed by the grey look thereon.

"I cut out the paragraph and sent it her in an envelope. I had an old letter of yours in my possession, and I copied the characters so successfully that, when the letter was addressed, even you, yourself would scarcely have detected the difference. Yes! I sent her the announcement and then, the very same day as she received it, she was claimed by her mother; and so—and so, you lost sight of her, Ernest. When next you met she was engaged to Hugo Rulston. All my doing; but all done for love of you, Ernest!"

The words died away in a whisper. Silence fell, only broken by the painful breathing of the sufferer.

"Ernest!"

"Yes, Adeline."

"Your forgiveness—and your kiss. Quick, or it may be too late."

(Continued on page 472.)

## FROM AILING BABY TO BIG HEALTHY CHILD.

New Oxford Street.

To the Manager of

The Charles A. Vogeler Co.,  
45, Farringdon Road,  
London.

Dear Sir,—I have been intending for some time to write and let you know what a capital medicine your Vogeler's Compound is. I have used it for myself for some considerable time and have always found benefit therefrom, but I had never thought of giving it to a child. My baby, from the time it

was one month old, suffered from chronic constipation, nothing seemed to have any effect upon her. I was at my wit's end, when I thought I would try the Compound and see if it would do her any good. I gave her three drops in water three times per day, and to my great delight it had the desired effect. I continued giving it to her for a month, but long before that time she was quite well. She has improved wonderfully ever since, and is a big healthy child now. I think many mothers would be glad to know of this. It is a pleasant medicine to take, and therefore would be all the more valuable to mothers for their children.

Yours truly, M. L. M. BRAHAM.

Many physicians of high standing prescribe Vogeler's Curative Compound, for it cures many times after their best skill has failed, because it is made by a reliable firm from the formula of a brother physician, who has for years, and is today, practising in the most selected part of the West End of London. It can be obtained in 1s. 1d. and 2s. 6d. sizes from all reliable medicine dealers.

## THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER.

—10—

### CHAPTER XV.

WHO shall paint the aspect of the footman's face, as he opened the door for Mary Meadows at nine o'clock the next morning? Mrs. Martin (thoughtful soul) had, as we know, telegraphed down to Danesford House, and inquired if Mary was with her mother; and the answer was short, sharp, and decisive—"No!"

A postman next door had seen the delinquent in Charing Cross Station, along with a gentleman who looked like an officer! And here was Mary actually at the hall-door the next morning, as cool as a cucumber—not but she looked pale—and ringing at the visitors' bell no less!

"If you will walk inside I'll inquire if Miss Darvall will see you," he said; and after a long wait the culprit was suffered to walk upstairs, it being supposed that she was going to make a clean breast of it to her mistress, who was a fool to allow her to darken her door.

Mary had had a double journey, an exciting interview, a long walk from the station, and nothing to eat since five o'clock the previous evening; so it was no wonder that her knees knocked together as she went up the shallow stairs, and along familiar passages, her faltering gait being accented by spectators to the tottering of a person bowed down with guilt.

Miss Darvall was in her dressing-room, and had just finished breakfast, when her maid was announced. She was not alone. Mrs. Martin was with her, boiling over with impatience to see the downfall of the favourite. All through their dainty little meal she had dinned into Miss Darvall's ears the obnoxious sentence, "I told you so, I told you so!"

"Well, Mary!" cried Julia, becoming very red, and pushing back her chair as she spoke. "I wonder you have the courage to face me, I do indeed! What have you to say for yourself?"

Mary looked at her, then at Mrs. Martin, who was glaring at her with malignant triumph, and drumming her fingers on the table, but said nothing.

"You were not at home last night, after all?"  
"No!"

"And pray where were you if not at Danesford?"

"I will tell you all about it if you will send Mrs. Martin away."

"Send me away! Stuff and nonsense! I think I ought to be the one above all to listen to this extraordinary story," was the tart reply.

"Now, dear Mrs. Martin, do—do go, I pray! You can do no good by staying, and may do a great deal of harm."

"Well, of course, if you put it in that way I have no alternative!" and Mrs. Martin succumbed with as good a grace as she could.

As soon as she was gone Julia cried impatiently.—

"Now then, Mary, begin!"

Mary, tired as she was, complied at once.

"Well, miss, I got a message from Captain Elliot, as it turned out, took a cab to where I was summoned, thinking it was only my duty after the message; and I caught the train, meeting a strange lady on the platform. It was so dark that I could not see the country. All beyond the windows was blank darkness, and the train was express."

"And what first really opened your eyes?"

"The sound of the sea, and finding myself at Folkestone."

"Folkestone!"

"Yes, in time to embark in the boat for Boulogne."

"And then?"

"Then I saw the whole plot. I refused to stir a step beyond the pier in spite of all he could say or do; and in the end I left him there after the boat had gone, and came back by the first train; but I've had a long, miserable journey, and" (placing her hands to her temples) "my head is splitting."

"I never heard of such abominable conduct, never! Captain Elliot, of all people, that I

thought such a gentleman, and though rather a flirt, not inclined to lose his heart to anyone, or let it go farther than he could take it back. And to lose his head about a girl in your station! He ought to be cut by everybody, and he shall! He ought to be reported at the Horse Guards—he ought to be hanged, that he ought! It's just these charming, fascinating, gentlemanly men, that you think are the very mirror of honour, that are really rascals of the deepest dye. Such wretches ought to be gibbeted! Then as to you, Mary, I believe your story, but you won't find many that will do so—no one else in this house, I dare not keep you. Papa was full of it this morning, and said all sorts of horrible things that made me very angry, and that you were never to darken the doors again, and all that."

This order was grounded on an animosity that he bore to the good-looking maid ever since she had flatly and furiously refused to permit the ogre-like master of the house to kiss her, and she had on one occasion threatened to tell his daughter of his conduct, and had gone so far as to throw his proffered present in his face.

"The long and short of it is, Mary," continued Miss Julia, "that much as I like you, and believe in you, I cannot keep you. You will have to go. All the same, I am your friend, and I will help you on the sly in every way in my power."

"May I have a cup of tea?" asked her companion, abruptly.

"To be sure you may. You must be nearly fainting," rising and pouring it out, "and, you know, you would not get one downstairs now if you were dying for it. What do you think of doing?"

"I shall go home to-day to Danesford, and take in sewing. I have a little money put by, and in summer it is easier and cheaper to live than in winter, and by-and-by something may turn up."

"And I will give you lots of work to do for me, Mary; and besides that, I will avenge you if Captain Elliot comes down to Carnforth. I'll make the place too hot to hold him—that I will!"

"Do not. Listen first of all to me. I am going to tell you what no one in this world knows but five people. You will make the sixth. Promise me on your honour to keep what I shall tell you a secret."

"I promise, on my honour."

"Even that will not suffice. I know how tempting it is to seem wiser than others, and how easily we betray things in spite of one's self. Here is your Testament. Swear it!" reaching her the book.

"I swear!" said Julia, gravely kissing the book.

"I owe you this confession, as you have believed in me and befriended me, and I tell you this to show that I am not ungrateful, and that your faith is not misplaced. I—"looking across at her with steady eyes—"was married more than two years ago to Captain Elliot!"

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Julia, throwing up her hands so suddenly that she upset the sugar bowl. "Are you in earnest? What do you mean? Am I awake?"

"Oh, yes! I quite wide awake, and I shall tell you my story. Let me get it over now, for I must soon be going."

"Two years ago I met Captain Elliot strolling about the Danesford woods. For lack of something to do he amused himself by playing at making love to me, and I fell deeply in love with him, with all the passion of first love, of a naturally romantic nature, and the folly of eighteen. I kept our meetings secret to please him, but one day my father discovered him taking a tender leave of me."

"And the fat was in the fire!" exclaimed her listener, with homely force.

"Yes, and burnt to a cinder; for he took me up to the Park that very evening, and told the whole tale to old Mr. Elliot, and denounced Maxwell in the strongest language!"

"And after that?"

"My lover assured his uncle that he liked me very well, but had not the slightest idea of marrying me!"

"Pleasant for you!"



"And honourable of him, and a nice awakening for me. However, his uncle, who held very strict views on such matters, insisted on our being married straight out of hand. Either that, or, he said, he would disinherit his nephew! In vain I pleaded, in vain Captain Eliot stormed, the thing was to be; and two days later we were married by license in Caversham, the only witness being Mr. Eliot, my people, the parson, and the clerk! Captain Eliot made one condition beforehand, and that was that we should part at the church door; and I made another—that I need never—never bear his name!"

"Then what, in the name of goodness, was the use of getting married?" cried Julia.

"You may well ask. No two more reluctant people ever stood at the altar together; but we were driven there by our elders. His uncle was inexorable, and Maxwell was not stolid enough to refuse me and fourteen thousand a year! I implored him to let me off! but, under such circumstances, was it likely? Then I was hurried to the altar by my people, who were dazzled by my magnificent prospects. And so the wedding came off, legally and privately!"

"And afterwards?"

"Afterwards he went to India and I went home. Not a soul in the place knew that I was anything but Mary Meadows; and as far as I'm concerned, they never shall know!"

"And when he came back from India, the other day?"

"He was amazed to discover that I was your maid. He has fallen in love with me a second time! He has tried to see me; he has written me volumes, begging me to make it up, to forget the past, and to be his wife before all the world, and mistress of his home!"

"And you would not?"

"No."

"And this is the only offer he had made you?"

"No; he has settled a large income on me if I decline to have anything to say to him. It has been lying at his bankers for eighteen months; for after he went to India he repented and tried to make amends."

"Still you said no?"

"Still I said no. It maddens him to think of me, his wife, living in service. There I punish him sharply; and I believe he is really very fond of me. As a last resource, he and my mother planned that foolish affair last night which, as I told him, cost me my name and my place. But my name, however blighted, I preferred to his!"

"You told him that? Well, you did not spare him. And what else?"

"Oh! he begged and implored me to go with him—to even put him on a year's probation! I cannot tell you all he said. We were down on the pier, amid the waves and the darkness. He was terribly anxious—terribly in earnest!"

"And to all his entreaties what did you say?"

"I said No!—no!—no!"

"Oh, Mary! How could you be so ungrateful and hard!"

"And that I would never take his name, or his money, or have anything to say to him."

"In short, you, Mary Meadows, my maid, flung wealth, position, love, duty, to this gentleman's face; for though he was wrong once—very wrong twice, in carrying you off yesterday—he is a gentleman! He offered to make you all the amends in his power, and what did you do?"

"I said No! always, and I went away and left him by himself standing alone at the end of the pier. He did not see me off."

"I should have been surprised if he did," interrupted Julia, hotly. "Mary—Eliot, I always knew you were a cool, self-possest girl. I now think you are a monster, with a heart of stone—that I do. Once he was wrong, very wrong, but he has made ample amends. Now you are wrong!"

"No! If you had been treated as I was you would have done just the same."

"No, I would not. And, you crazy girl, do you mean to tell me that you prefer taking in sewing, and living in a gate-lodge with your old mother, to being the mistress of Carnforth Park, and the wife of the handsomest—yes,

and nicest—most honourable young man in the county? I was very nearly falling in love with him myself; and how mean of you, Mary, never to give me a hint, and let me talk to you like a fool!"

"I did once or twice, only you never took them. I told you he never would marry!"

"And then this was the secret between you?"

"Yes, this was the secret."

"How plainly I see everything now!" said the heiress, leaning her head on her hand, and looking at her companion thoughtfully. "Of course it will all come right, and you will make it up. How delightful for me to have you as my nearest neighbour at Carnforth Park—it's no distance!"

"I am nearer at the lodge, and how delightful it would be for you to come over to Carnforth and dine with your maid, would it not?" returned Mary, sarcastically.

"How bitter you are, and how scornful you look! Poor Captain Eliot! After all, he got much the worst of the bargain. I never in all my experience knew anyone as proud as you are. Where did you get such a stock of pride—surely not from old Mrs. Meadows!"

"No; but where I inherit it I cannot tell you, and now I may as well add one secret to another. I'm not Mrs. Meadows's daughter at all!"

"Not! Oh, well, after this morning I'll never be surprised again, though that is not quite so startling as the other secret. You do not resemble the Meadows's in the least. I believe you have good blood in your veins?"

"I believe I have—but whose? I am a foundling, picked up by John Meadows, without name or clue."

"Well, at least you have a very good name of your own now, which, if you do not at once take into wear, and take 'Max,' as they call him, into your good graces, I shall say that you are mad, wicked, and unreasonable, and that you well deserve to be well punished for your obstinacy. Oh," as a knock came to the door, "here comes Mrs. Martin. I shall tell her you have cleared yourself most satisfactorily, dear, and I'll say good-bye," kissing her. "I'll write to you at Daneford, and we shall meet down there in about ten days—only, perhaps, I shall find you at Carnforth!"

#### CHAPTER XVI.

MARY went down to Caversham and appeared at Daneford the same evening, much to Mrs. Meadows's grief and astonishment—Mrs. Meadows, who had been hoping, since she had seen her accomplice and neighbour, James Cotter, that the runaway scheme had turned out a complete success; and here, at eight o'clock the next evening, came a knock at the door, and when she opened it there was Mary—Mary, in fact, with a little bag in her hand. Over the scene which ensued between Mary and Mrs. Meadows let us drop a kindly veil. Expostulation on one side, angry rebuke, denunciation and condemnation from the elder woman—tears from both.

After a day or two Mary settled down as completely as if she had never been from home, and set to work with her needle in right good earnest, as her needle was to be really and truly the staff of life and support of her mother and herself.

Her toll was not made the sweater by the incessant and bitter speeches that fell from the old woman's lips. Taunts—Jesus Meadows was not a noble character—that Mary could see her reduced to almost want, whilst she had thousands lying to her hand in the bank.

"Look at us!" she cried, angrily; "three times last week we dined on tea and eggs!"

"But, mother, you said you preferred it, and in old days I remember you often had it from choice."

"Don't talk to me of old days, when I had every comfort, and John bringing in three pounds a week. And here are you sitting down till dark, and all you get is—say fifteen shillings."

"But we have a free house, and there are the

hens, and we get vegetables for nothing, and it does not take much to keep two women," pleaded Mary.

"It does not take much to keep me, anyway. And it's plain I'll never have much ease as this side of the grave. To think of that nice, generous young gentleman that's just dying for you; to think of how he came here and talked, and said all he wanted was to see you and make comfortable and happy, and how you had as much right to the money as he had, and that, indeed, but for you, he would not have had a halfpenny at all! Oh! when I think of the house up there, and the silver, and the carriages and horses, and all the grandeur belonging to you, and you living, slaving here, it just drives me fairly mad."

"Mother, don't talk so. I'll work my fingers to the bone for you. I'll slave from morning till night. I'll do everything but just one thing."

"The only thing I want you to do, you ungrateful, headstrong girl. You'll see me die in the workhouse yet. At least, you might take the fortune he has settled on you by the lawyers. You need not take him; he said so."

"And what would people say if they saw a young woman of my condition suddenly bursting out on the world with several thousands a year? How could I honestly account for my riches? If I took the money I must take him and his name. That I will never—never do!"

"Oh! you are enough to drive me crazy and demented!" almost shrieked Mrs. Meadows; "if I don't die in the poorhouse I'll surely die in the country lunatic asylum!"

Mary's life at this period was not very bright; her whole time was spent at her needle, and her only companion was one who saw her glittering castles in the air fading to nothing, and spent all her idle hours in bemoaning her own hard fate, and heaping fierce reproaches on her adopted daughter's head.

Occasionally she went out, and strolled slowly up to Carnforth, and surveyed the scene with mingled grief and complacency.

One evening she returned from this self-chosen pilgrimage in tears—tears for which she refused to assign a reason, and retiring to bed remained there for a whole week weeping at long intervals, drinking tea at short intervals, and constantly announcing her approaching demise!

No one could be more patient and tender than Mary, to her everyday work, had now the duty of nursing appended. The reason of Mrs. Meadows's "attack," as she vaguely termed it, proved to be that she had accidentally heard up at the Park that Carnforth was to let, and that Mr. Maxwell, as they called him, had left the country, and would not be back, it was said, for years! The housekeeper imparted to Mrs. Meadows "that there was, in her opinion, a lady in the case, and that people said that he had proposed for someone and had been refused, and that was the reason he was going away to the war in Egypt!"

"Refused, indeed!" said her listener, suddenly bursting into tears, to the housekeeper's amazement and consternation. In spite of her anxious inquiries, all the old woman would do was to shake her head violently, and sob hysterically, and finally she sobbed herself away without uttering a single word.

Mrs. Jones, as she stood looking after her on the steps, could only come to one conclusion, viz.:—that old Mrs. Meadows was now quite gone in the head. She was exceedingly sorry for her daughter—such a superior, steady girl, and so much above her station in manners and appearance—she had not as yet heard a breath of the "London to Folkestone" scandal—and the next day she sent her down a large supply of mending and plain work, for no matter whether the master was at home or abroad the household linen must be kept up.

This lucrative "job" to Mrs. Jones's great amazement, was declined, and returned with a very civil little note, saying that "Mary Meadows had as much work as she could undertake for the present." This, I am sorry to say, was not strictly true; but her soul revolted from managing or making for the Carnforth establishment;

from any other big house the employment would have been truly welcome.

Mrs. Jones received back the bundle, and when she had read the few lines that accompanied it she made up her mind that Mary Meadows was just as crazy as her mother, and that no doubt in the world but there was a strain of insanity in their family.

Early in August Miss Darvall and Captain Burn came down to Danesford, but neither Mrs. Martin or Mr. Darvall; and the reason of that, to everyone's amazement, was explained by the fact that they were away on their honeymoon!

Yes, the plain, middle-aged, watchful, stony, aged widow, without youth looks, money, manners, or even the fascination of an artful tongue, had secured for herself one of the best parts in the country. How did she manage it?

Ah! that no one could tell.

Their courtship was so secret that even Julia had not the very smallest suspicion of the state of affairs; and when one day at lunch her father, after quaffing off a huge beaker of brandy and water, gruffly said,

"Julia, Mrs. Martin here is now Mrs. Darvall. We were married this morning! There is your stepmother."

She could not have been more horrified had a bomb alighted and exploded on the table before her. She literally gasped for breath, as she looked from one to the other of the happy pair, and then at Captain Burn. He was glum enough, but this was apparently no news to him. He was evidently in the bride and bridegroom's confidence, and in a bad humour.

"Oh, papa!" was all Julia could say.

"You see, I want a sensible person at the head of the house, Julia. You are too young; and, besides, you will be going to a house of your own one of these days, eh? The missus here and I will go for a little trip, and you and Burn can go down to Danesford before us, and have everything square by the time we join you. And you can tell one little bit of news to everybody. We are going over to Paris for ten days. And see here, Jock"—to Burn—"put this in all the swell papers. The missus made it out herself, just now."

Burn extended his thick fingers reluctantly, and took a piece of paper, on which was written, in a very pointed, old-maidish hand,

"On the third inst., by special license, at St. Peter's, Eaton Square Benjamin Darvall, Esq., of Danesford Place, Westshire, to Mary Ann, widow of the late Jeremiah Martin, of London, Esquire."

"I think you might have told me!" said Julia, looking over at her stepmother, indignant. She was some degrees less afraid of her than of her father, whom, in the homely language, she used when conversing with herself, she was literally afraid to "tackle."

"Well, and are you not told now?" retorted Mrs. Darvall, sharply. "Are you not the first to know?"

"Yea; but only when it's all over!" exclaimed Julia, tartly.

"That makes no difference!" said the other, with a gleam in her cold, grey eyes. "It would have come off just the same," implying that Julia would have done all in her power to retain her own seat upon the domestic throne, from which she had just been so cruelly and so suddenly deposed.

Miss Darvall was wise for once, and held her peace; but she made up her mind that she would have it out with her stepmother on another occasion. No use in saying much now, for of course her father would stand by his bride. And what a bride! Why did he marry her? Ay, that was his secret!

The happy pair set out for France, and Julia and Captain Burn set out for Caversham, Julia being in a very low, depressed state of mind.

The evening after her arrival she stole down to the lodge, after dinner, to unburthen herself freely to her former confidante, and found Mary working by the light of one candle, and Mrs. Meadows reading the *Weekly News* through a pair of very fierce-looking, horn-rimmed spectacles.

After exchanging a few ordinary remarks

about health and the weather with the old woman, Julia suddenly turned to Mary and said,—

"I want you to come out and take a turn with me. Captain Burn is smoking in the stable, and I'm alone. Never mind your hat, the night is lovely!"

Once outside the lodge she seized her arm, and said,—

"Have you heard what has happened, Mary?"

"No; I never go up to the house now. I've heard nothing."

"My father has married Mrs. Martin. They are on their honeymoon now!"

"Never!" ejaculated her companion, stopping and gazing at her in amazement.

"Yes, but they are!"

"And why did he do it?"

"That's more than I can tell you. But from a word or two dropped by Jock Burn, I have my suspicions!"

"Suspicions which you will not share with me!"

"Yes, I will. I would be a base, ungrateful creature if I did not give you my whole confidence, considering all that you have told me, and what I know about you. Besides which, it is a tremendous relief to my mind to have some one creature into whose ear I can pour all my troubles, and who will never betray any of my secrets."

"And what wonderful secrets yours must be!" said Mary, rather sarcastically. "A big bill you are afraid to hand over to your father, just at present; a debt for ball dresses, oh!"

"No, my secrets are not in that line; he never grudges money until lately; and, of course, that is her doing. She wants to put her hand in his purse now. I firmly believe that the reason he married her is that she has a hold over him, and he is somehow in her power."

"Nonsense. How could he be?"

"I'm sure of it. Nay, Captain Burn said as much. He'd been having too many brandies and sodas. All the same, he was sober enough to know what he was saying, and he said, 'Ju, do you know the reason Ben married that old scarecrow?' and I said 'No, nor anyone else!' Then I'll tell you," he said. "She has got hold of a secret of his in a very underhand way, and if she was to split on him it would be the deuce, so the safest way to caulk up her mouth was to be spliced to her." He goes back to all those sea terms when he is a little sprung. Sprung means screwed—you may not know."

"I wish you would not use such words, Julia," said her companion, abruptly dropping the rôle of dependent. "And even if Captain Burn told you that, I don't think you ought to have let it go any farther—even to me—though I'm perfectly safe."

"Why not? What nonsense! I only told you that she knows some secret of his—I've not told you what it was—I only wish I knew myself, and I'd tell you that in a minute. If she knows it, why should I not know it? I'm determined to discover it. I'll never rest as long as I live until I ferret out this great mystery. That has made that horrible woman Mrs. Darvall of Danesford!"

"If I were you I'd leave it alone," said Mary, gravely.

"Well, but I won't. Have you ever heard our history, and how we came to get this place? Of course you have not, and I shall enlighten your mind this very night. What would you take papa to be—come now?"

"I really could not say. I only know he comes from Melbourne."

"Yes, we all do that; he, and I, and Jock Burn. He was captain of a small trading steamer, and Jock was his mate till about two years ago. I must say that they have polished up wonderfully, and so have I. I was a milliner—that's to say, I was serving my time. I never remember mother; but I lived when I was small with a horrid old woman, who beat and starved me. Then father got up in the world, and we lived in lodgings when he was at home, and I stayed there when he was at sea, and went to a day-school. After that I was bound to a milliner, and as I got on in my teens I had a lover, the only one I ever cared two straws about, though

I've flirted with others fast enough. He was a stockman. Oh! Mary, he was so good-looking, and I was so fond of him and he of me! He was not a gentleman. He told me himself his father was nothing but a poor cobbler in Perthshire, and he had come out to the colony to seek his fortune. His name, I'm forgetting to tell you, was Hector Campbell. He was on a sheep run about two hundred miles up country and I did not see him often—certainly, in my case, absence made the heart grow fonder," and here Julia sighed.

"And you were engaged to him?"

"Yes, after a long while. He did not speak till he thought he had enough to marry on; but, of course, I knew—well, as we all know, when a man likes us—we were engaged. Father made no objection, but we were to wait for a year. He told me that he was not very keen on Hector, though he was a likely enough sort of lad—that's how he spoke then—for that he had expected a smart craft like me would have captured a bigger prize—especially in the way of money; for Hector, though getting on, was poor enough. He always sent some of his wages home."

"And what happened next?"

"Next Father and Jock went away for a long trip, coasting to Sydney and to New Zealand, carrying wood and tallow. They were not back for nearly three months, and then they came home in a great state of mind, about what I could not make out. They gave up the *Jane Bacon*—that was the name of the steamer—and they spent half their time in a lawyer's office, or cogitating together at home over pipes and rum, Hector and I could not make it out, but we knew in good time.

"One evening he was having supper with us—just tea and dampers, and a bit of cold mutton. Father and Jock were having rum and water, and were being very talkative and puffed up about something, and all at once Jock broke out and said—

"It's no use keeping it any longer, let's tell her;" and so they told me then. And then

"What did they tell you?"

"That father's name was not Daniel at all, but Darvall, and that he was heir to a great fortune and a splendid place in England; the lawyers had found it all out, and we were going home—that is, to England—in ten day's time."

"Yes?"

"And I was to be a grand lady, and to be educated and wear fine dresses and diamonds, and ride and drive as grand horses as if I were a duchess. Of course I was delighted, and I screamed and laughed and danced about the room for joy as if I were a lunatic."

"And what did Hector Campbell do? Did he dance with you?" inquired Mary rather drily.

"Poor Hector! No; he looked completely dumbfounded. And he asked my father if he had ever expected this fortune, and how it was his name was not Darvall, and father was very short with him, and said that it had been Darvall always till it was entered once in a log-book by mistake as Daniel, and he had let it stand, thinking one name was as good as the other. I never knew this before; and if you don't believe me, said father, you can just step over to Grabball's office and see everything in black and white; but Hector, of course, said he believed every word, and offered his congratulations, and then father told him that all must be at an end between him and me, for of course, I was now a lady born! and he a common stockman could not expect to marry me, and that I must make a great match—maybe a lord—but that if a few pounds at any time was any use he had only to have them from father for the asking!"

"Oh! And what did Hector say?"

"Not much; he said he wanted no money; he looked ghastly pale, and he very soon got up and went away!"

"Poor Hector!" exclaimed Mary.

"Ay, you may say so. I sailed away and left him, and I'll never forget the look on his face as I last saw him on the pier, and I leaning over the steamer's side and waving good-bye."



"HAVE YOU HEARD WHAT HAS HAPPENED, MARY?" SAID JULIA, SEIZING HER ARM.

"Julia, you were a wretch to jilt him!"

"I was, but I was so dazzled with grandeur, with dress. I got lovely clothes in Melbourne and a book on etiquette. I learnt how to do my hair and to dance a waltz—all in the ten days. My head was turned. I could think of nothing but all the fine things I was to do, to see, to eat, and to wear. I had no time to think of Hector till we were far away at sea, and then there were others! I had half the passengers at my feet. Was I not the great Australian heiress?"

"And the great Australian doll without a heart," added Mary.

"Now, Mary; Mary! Don't you talk of hearts. All the way home father was, as it were, learning up his part of 'gentleman,' dropping his sea expressions, and copying other passengers. There was one he really studied, and I see the result every day."

"Father sat opposite him, and watched him, and he ate and drank like him, walked like him, and really copied him very faithfully. He also learned the book of etiquette, read some of the ship's library—did not talk but listened to others; and at the end of six weeks' trip he had improved himself so much you would hardly know him for the same person in some ways."

"Father is clever, and very ambitious. I copied the ladies on board—saw how they ate and drank, and did not put their knives in their mouths, nor drink their tea from a saucer, nor said 'taws,' or use common slang words. Altogether father and I were improved. I cannot say so much for Jock. He smoked no end—drank too much, and was always talking to the sailors; whereas father was very anxious to sink his trade."

"When we got to London he went to the very best tailor and bootmaker and old him to turn him out well, and he did. We lived for nearly a year in lodgings in Kensington, while matters were arranged—the law is so slow."

"Mrs. Martin kept these lodgings, and when we left father asked her to be my chaperon, and

offered her three hundred a-year. I hated this, but he would have his way; and now she is Mrs. Darwall! It turned out worse than I dreamt of!"

"And what do you do in London?"

"I attended classes, dancing, riding, drawing and singing. Mrs. Martin played my accompaniments. She was a governess, and father, I think, was 'polishing himself up,' too. He read, he wrote, he went to theatres and races, he said, to see what the life was like at home. Many an hour he was shut up with Jock over papers and things."

"Father took no pains with himself, and I often heard them quarrelling—so did Mrs. Martin; and once I caught her with her ear to the keyhole. She never liked me since that day. Jock has a fine head for management; he knows what's what. He had seen better days—and, indeed, I believe when he first went out to Australia—it was in the old gold-digging days—he was a gentleman! Then he fell into bad company and poverty. He was barman at an hotel; navy on a railway; a stockman; finally, before the coast. He liked the sea best and stuck to that, and got on to be mate; but he is a very rough specimen, and, as you may notice, we are always squabbling. Still, I believe at the bottom of his heart Jock keeps a corner for me, and I am sure I do for him; and we talk of Melbourne on the sly."

"Why does he live with you? Why did he come home from Melbourne at all?"

"Oh! because he was father's chum—his 'mate,' as they call it out there, and what was luck for one was luck for the other. That's understood."

"I wish your father had extended his luck to poor Hector Campbell!"

"Don't talk of him, Mary! My conscience is always worrying me about him, and you will think it a strange thing that not one single gentleman that I have met pleases me half as well as poor Hector! Is it not queer, considering that I have such blue blood in my veins, and

that he is the son of a common old Scotch labourer! There! I hear the stable clock striking ten, and I must run!" Hugging her companion she set off at the top of her speed.

Mary remained in the avenue looking after her for some seconds, and said half aloud,

"Julia, I like you. You are my friend, but, all the same, dear, I doubt your blue blood!"

(To be continued.)

POLLARD'S, Limited, Bradford, are offering excellent value in tailor-made costume-skirts at 4s. 6d. each. They also send their book of patterns to all readers who mention the LONDON READER when writing.

An easy and economical method of silvering mirrors will be found in the following recipe: Mix 90 parts by measure of a solution of Rochelle salts at 1:50 specific gravity, with 900 parts distilled water, and boil them in a flask, drop in carefully 20 parts of a solution of nitrate of silver, of specific gravity 1.18 and boil again. This solution can be bottled and kept for any length of time. Then prepare another fluid by adding ammonia to a solution of nitrate of silver until the precipitate is entirely dissolved, filtering and diluting 1 part of it with 100 parts of water. For use put equal parts of the two preparations in a suitable vessel; clean the glass well, as the success depends upon having the glass chemically pure. Immerse the glass in the above and allow it to remain until sufficiently coated. It should then be backed with a coat of lac varnish. To clean the glass thoroughly, first cover with thick whiting cream, free from grit; when dry, rub off with purest cotton-wool. Then wet surface with dilute nitric acid, and afterwards wash with distilled water poured over it. Then the glass is to be kept suspended in a flat vessel of alcohol until ready for immersion in the bath.



THE MISERABLE, SHIPWRECKED CREATURES WERE GENEROUSLY WELCOMED ON BOARD THE VENETIAN."

## ORDEAL BY FIRE.

## CHAPTER XL

THE Rector of Trefusis was well-nigh distracted when he heard of the fate of the *Atalanta*. The only one of his family old enough to be on close brotherly terms with Sir Denzil before he went to India, tenderly attached to his senior, his very heart ached for the bad news which he must send over the ocean.

Still he would not despair at once. He knew that if the two sailors had been rescued some of the passengers might have had equal good fortune. He knew that on board an English vessel a lonely, unprotected woman would certainly have been given every chance of life; but he felt desperately anxious, and with his wife's full approval, he went up to London, feeling that he could have no rest of mind until he had interviewed the two sailors and heard their story.

It was a pitiful one. The men declared that they left the *Atalanta* in her last remaining boat, some dozen women and children were in it, an officer in command and sufficient men to relieve each other were at the oars. They were six days at sea before they were rescued. Their provisions were exhausted on the third day and they had suffered the most terrible privations since; the sea was so rough that the waves often washed over the slender craft, drenching them to the skin. Two children were swept overboard by an unusually high wave, their mother in despair threw herself after them and perished. Not one of the passengers survived till they sighted the vessel which afterwards rescued them, and though their officer lived to be taken on board by her he died in a few hours.

The *Atalanta* must have gone down within a few hours of their leaving her. They were near enough to hear the sound of the explosion. They had no manner of doubt that when the flames reached a store of gunpowder, which was part of the freight, the ill-fated vessel was blown up.

Thus far Mr. Trefusis listened in silence, then he broke in impetuously,—

"Do you know the names of the passengers with you in the boat?"

"Not all of them," returned one of the men frankly, but the other interposed,—

"There was only one lady left on board the *Atalanta*, and she just gave up her life for another. We'd one place left and the Captain offered it to her; he'd meant her to go in the first boat, only somehow it started without her. She was just ready to come with us when a woman in the boat set up a scream and declared she'd not go unless he made room for her daughter—a girl of sixteen or so. We couldn't take another without the risk of upsetting the boat, and the Captain told her as gently as he could, but she'd not be pacified, and then the lady she just pushed the girl into her place and stayed behind. It was suicide sure enough, but I don't think somehow up in heaven it was counted a sin to her."

"I am sure it was not," said Archie Trefusis, his eyes not quite dry. "She must have been a noble woman. Her friends may well be proud of her. Do you know her name?"

"Lady Trefusis. She was the wife of an Indian judge, and the grandest lady on board, but there was nothing proud or stuck up about her. I've seen her play with the little children as if she loved them, and when one of the crew broke his leg she used to go and see him, and talk to him just like a friend."

Mr. Trefusis rewarded both the men, and asked anxiously,—

"You are sure there was no chance of her escape? Her husband is my brother, and I don't want to write the bad news to him while even one ray of hope remains."

But the elder of the sailors shook his head.

"We left her behind on the doomed ship, sir, and nothing but a miracle could save her. Her sister, now, was in the first boat and had a fair chance."

"Her sister! Do you mean Lady Trefusis was not travelling alone?"

"No; her sister, Miss Lindsay, was with her. She thought a sight of her, too, and waited on her just like a servant. She was a pretty girl, too, but give me Lady Trefusis."

The Rector felt bewildered, but another mail would be in the next day. It was possible that letters from Denzil might explain this new statement. Meanwhile it seemed clear to Archie there was no hope, his unknown sister-in-law had given her life for another's.

It was sad to see the superscription on Sir Denzil's letter, "Lady Trefusis," and to know that it could never be opened by its owner. The Rector was relieved to find a note for himself. Even without it he would have known the sailor was right about Idone's sister, for Sir Denzil had written to "Miss Lindsay" by the same mail. Archie Trefusis read his own letter with a strange pity for the brother who was as yet unconscious of his loss.

Sir Denzil wrote that he had only just learned his wife had invited her sister on a visit. Little as he had seen of her he felt the most perfect confidence in Nan Lindsay. She had promised him not to leave Idone till he returned to England. If his mother found two guests more than she had room for Idone and her sister must migrate to the Hall.

If his wife did not like the country Archie must take a furnished house at Southsea or Bournemouth; but in either case she must not be parted from her sister.

He had never realised before how much he was to blame for cutting her adrift from her family.

Nan Lindsay was poor, and had to earn her own living; but she seemed to him one of the most perfect gentlewomen he had ever seen; and he begged that his family would be kind to her and welcome her for her sister's sake.

For his wife he had no fear. Idone was made to win all hearts. Her health was his only anxiety. He should count the weeks till he could join her; meanwhile he trusted his

treasure to his own people, he knew they would be good to her.

Nora's eyes filled with tears as she read the letter over her husband's shoulder.

"How can you write the news to him, Archie, it will half break his heart."

"I must write, and by this mail too. No doubt he knows the main fact of the accident to the ship by cable."

"Wouldn't it be better to cable out to him?"

"I don't think so. If I wired 'your wife is lost' the shock might kill him. If I write he will have had three weeks or more of anxiety, and the blow won't be so terribly sudden."

"You must break the news to your mother. I hope she won't say it is a merciful relief."

"Nora!"

"Well, you know she dreaded the thought of Idone's coming, and she has told me several times she did not think it was a happy marriage."

"I think just those two things will make her feel the blow worse. Mother has such a generous nature. She will be full of remorse now that she ever had a harsh thought of Idone."

And he was quite right. Lady Mary took the fate of her unknown daughter-in-law very bitterly to heart. She seemed to feel it was her fault, because she had so dreaded Idone's coming; but her son tried to convince her that it was not the case, and finally suggested,—

"If you liked there is one thing in our power which would have pleased Idone in her lifetime. I hear there is good news of the first of the *Atalanta*'s boats. It was met by an outward bound steamer, and the passengers were taken on board and landed at Aden. They may be home any day now. We have it on Denzell's authority that Miss Lindsay is poor and has no home or near relation. Don't you think for her sister's sake we might have her here, and try to make her happy?"

"You always think of nice things, Archie," put in his youngest sister. "Mother, do say yes, it would seem like doing something for Idone."

"I will write to Miss Lindsay at once," said Lady Mary, "and beg her to come straight here."

"Couldn't we go and meet her?" asked Hilda, "most of the rescued passengers will have friends waiting to greet them. She will feel so terrible lonely if she has no one, and it will be so terrible if she hears, too, suddenly of her sister's fate."

The Rector could not leave his parish so soon again; but Douglas Trefusis at once offered to escort his sister. Hilda had better come up to London and stay with him. Then as soon as the steamer was expected he would take her down to the docks.

The barrister was perhaps the most worldly of the family, and he told Hilda frankly he thought they were going out of their way to saddle themselves with an incubus.

"Miss Lindsay has no claim on us," he said, gravely.

"But she is Denzell's sister-in-law," persisted Hilda.

"Whom he never saw till six weeks ago. Poor Idone's death cuts the link between them. Miss Lindsay has no home and no money. She may fast herself on you at River View for good and all."

"I don't think so; besides, I am quite sure Denzell will wish to provide for his sister-in-law, and we shall only be anticipating him."

Douglas said no more. Perhaps he had felt it his duty to offer the caution; but yet admitted his sister all the more for not taking it.

He was at some pains to find out exactly when the *Orotova* was expected, and he and Hilda were among the first persons to go on board.

"Why, there's Adair!" he exclaimed, suddenly, as he recognised an old school-fellow whom he had not met for three or four years. "Why, Adair," as he shook hands heartily, "are you home on leave?"

"I have come on private business," said Adair, leisurely; "but I don't think I shall ever feel like going back. I've had enough of sea voyaging at present. I suppose you have heard of our adventures?"

"You don't mean that you were on board the *Atalanta*?"

"Yes, worse luck. We got off in a little boat, and went through a rough time before we were fortunate enough to meet a steamer."

Hilda wondered how he found a place in the boats destined specially for women and children. Really, seeing how things were going, Mr. Adair had coolly seated himself in the stars, and seized an oar. The officer in command imagined the Captain had asked him to lend a hand with the rowing, and never guessed the cowardly ruse he had employed. It was not to be expected that Jim Adair would mention this to Douglas.

Hilda interposed.

"If Mr. Adair was on board the *Atalanta* he will know Miss Lindsay, and can tell us where to find her."

"Miss Lindsay!" Adair scowled. "She left the ship at Brindisi, and very glad we were to get rid of her."

Miss Trefusis felt more and more antagonistic to Jim Adair. She laid one hand on her brother's coat-sleeve.

"Douglas, do let us find someone who knew her plans. I can't bear to go home with no certain information."

The Captain was courtesy itself; but he could tell them very little. Miss Lindsay had been brought on board almost in a dying state. She revived greatly on the voyage, and was almost well when they reached Brindisi. Nothing would induce her to remain longer. She was almost beside herself with anxiety about her sister; and hoped, by hurrying home overland, to obtain news of her sooner.

The Captain added that a Mrs. Marsh, who had been a fellow-passenger of Miss Lindsay on board the *Atalanta*, probably knew more of her movements than anyone.

Mrs. Marsh was just ready to go on shore, but she spared a few minutes to answer Hilda's questions.

"Yes; Miss Lindsay was dreadfully anxious about her sister, and that was one reason why she landed at Brindisi; it was not the only one." The good lady looked round and lowered her voice. "The truth was Mr. Adair persecuted the poor girl so persistently that she would have done anything to get away from him."

"Persecuted her!" exclaimed Douglas. "But why did people allow it?"

"They couldn't help it. Besides, he kept his cruelty secret. But I had seen the beginning of it on board the *Atalanta*. Mr. Adair had proposed to Miss Lindsay and been refused. He renewed his suit both in the boat and here. Then he told her she had encouraged him (which was false), and that if she attempted to make herself known to her brother-in-law's people, he should just tell them what he knew of her."

"The cur!" broke from Douglas.

Mrs. Marsh nodded.

"He was just that. Miss Lindsay no more encouraged him than I did. She was a very beautiful girl, and everyone admired her, but that was not her fault. For my part I liked her very much, though I always felt she couldn't hold a candle to her sister."

"Then you liked Lady Trefusis!"

Mrs. Marsh hesitated.

"I did more than like her; I almost revered her. She was so good and true. She never thought of herself; and she seemed unhappy. She went back to the cabin for something she had forgotten—I did hear it was a lock of her babies' hair. The boat started before she was back. We'd much ado to keep Miss Lindsay from jumping out when she found her sister was left behind."

"My sister and I came to beg Miss Lindsay to make my mother's house her home, at any rate for the present. You were evidently in her confidence, Mrs. Marsh. Can you give me her address?"

"She hadn't one, Mr. Trefusis. She told me herself she had not a single friend in England. That, if she lost her sister, she was utterly alone."

"Poor girl! Her sister went down with the ill-fated ship."

"Then, Heaven help Miss Lindsay! A mere

slip of a girl, and a beautiful one, too. It will go hard with her alone in London."

It would indeed, Douglas and Hilda echoed the words in their hearts.

Mrs. Marsh would gladly have told them more, only she knew nothing further. Miss Lindsay had clung so pertinaciously to the hope of her sister's being alive, that she had never spoken of her own future as apart from hers. It was clear she feared Jim Adair as an enemy; and, from Mrs. Marsh's story, it seemed likely she would shrink from all the Trefusis family, lest he should have sought to prejudice them against her.

"Well, Hilda, we have failed," said Douglas, as they drove back to his bachelor abode, where his sister was received by special favour of his landlady. "It seems to me that Nan Lindsay is as lost to us as is her ill-fated sister."

## CHAPTER XII.

IDONIE TREFUSIS (the real one mind, not the girl who had so reluctantly borne that name on board the *Atalanta*) was by no means thoroughly selfish or heartless, and it is quite certain that if she had known the perils to which that return to their cabin exposed her sister, she would never have let Nan leave her side. She was only thoughtless and just a trifle spoilt.

It had seemed to her cruel that she should be asked to leave behind the only memorial she possessed of her dead babies, and she had permitted Nan to go on the quest instead of herself, because she had such faith in her sister she thought she would manage the exploit better and quicker than herself; and because she did not in the least grasp the fact that Nan was really risking her life.

When she was in the boat and perceived no trace of her sister, Idone would readily have turned back, but it was simply impossible; kind Mrs. Marsh simply held her hands and compelled her to keep her seat, saying gravely,—

"Your sister will come in the next boat. Believe me, you would only add to her difficulties by returning now."

The quiet tone of command, the motherly air of authority, did more for Idone than any threats or entreaties. She sat quite still, only she turned her beautiful eyes to her friend's face and asked, imploringly,—

"You are sure she will come?"

"Quite sure," answered Mrs. Marsh, promptly "all the women and children will leave the ship first. It's always the way in case of danger, and makes me thankful my husband could not go on with me to England, it would have tried me sorely to leave him behind."

Mr. Marsh was an Indian merchant, and he had been obliged to leave the *Atalanta* at the last port touched at, in order to have an interview with his partner, who was going out to India in a vessel due there the day after the *Atalanta* left. Mrs. Marsh had very much deplored having to finish her journey alone. She was thankful for it now. They were a sad enough party in the boat. The sailors from the first were despondent of their chances of rescue. The officer worked like a hero to keep up the spirits of the rest, and Jim Adair showed himself for once in his best colours, and if he had gained a seat in the best by fraud, at least, justified his presence there by his untiring efforts for the good of all.

It had come as a cruel blow to Idone when she found among the companions of her peril the man she had rejected. She tried hard to look at Adair's conduct from Nan's view. That believing her, "Miss Lindsay," free to be wooed and won he had only offered her a compliment in asking her to be his wife. She tried hard to believe no harm could come to her by this chance companionship, but it tried her terribly all the same.

At first Adair seemed to avoid her rather than otherwise, but later, when the little company had been decreased by two, the waves having washed that number of victims overboard in the night, he shifted his place to one at Idone's side.

"Fate is kinder to me than you were, Miss Lindsay," he whispered, "you refused me your hand in life, but destiny has arranged that we should die together."

"Oh! don't," pleaded the poor girl, "surely you would not say that there is no hope!"

"Little enough. No boat could live long in such seas as we are having, and I'd rather be drowned than die of starvation—it would come to that, you know."

Idonee shuddered. No hardship had ever yet touched her. In this time of peril her fancied troubles seemed very petty and childlike, though they had tried her sorely at the time.

"It's just a chance if any of us see land again," went on Adair; "don't you think, Miss Lindsay, we might be friends for the brief space remaining. Can't you change your mind now, and give me the right to care for you in life and death?"

It was night. The darkest hour of all that comes before the dawn. Most of the miserable travellers were asleep, only the men at the oars pulled on with a sort of despairing force, but they were at a little distance. It seemed to Idonee she and Jim Adair were alone with each other.

"I cannot," she said, simply; "believe me, Mr. Adair, I am sorry; but—"

"Look here!" he said, gruffly, "I love you so well that I would sell my soul to win you. Allowing there is a chance of our living to reach England, don't you see that your wisest policy is to cast in your lot with mine. I can be a powerful friend or a cruel foe."

"My sister will protect me," said Idonee, faintly, "and you can say nothing then against me."

"Listen, those foolish women have buoyed you up with false hopes. One of the boats was lost on the launching, the other would not hold half the passengers. Even I who knew little enough of Lady Trefusis am positive of one thing, she would not buy her life at the expense of another's. You, who are her sister, must feel she would never take a place in the boat if her taking it left another woman to die."

Idonee trembled from head to foot.

"This is terrible. But—"

"Listen," he went on, passionately, "I was near you when you sent your sister to her doom. I heard you say you would not leave the ship without some special trinket. Lady Trefusis went back to look for it. To humour your selfish whim she wanted to face the prospect of certain death. I know her husband slightly. I was at school with one of his brothers. If you attempt to claim help or hospitality from the Trefusis family on account of your relationship to poor Lady Trefusis, I warn you I shall tell them that you are her murderer."

Idonee shivered.

"And yet you say you love me."

"I love you too well to give you up. Be my wife and I swear that I will make you happy. My love for you is so intense that in time it must win for itself a return."

Mrs. Marsh felt a tight pressure on her arm, and woke with a start from her brief oblivion, it was to find Miss Lindsay clinging to her as one in direst peril.

"My dear, what is it? Are you ill?"

"Oh, save me, save me," whispered poor Idonee. "I am so frightened."

The dawn was breaking. Mrs. Marsh could distinguish the face of Miss Lindsay's nearest neighbour, and guessed why the poor girl had roused her. "Coward," she hissed to Adair, "can you not leave her in peace even now. Miss Lindsay," to Nan, "you had better change places with me; the very movement will do you good."

But it seemed that Adair's cruelty was to have fatal results. Miss Lindsay, who till then had borne up bravely in spite of her anxiety about her sister, suddenly collapsed when the officer doled out the breakfast rations. Instead of taking hers she looked at him with a blank stare of unconsciousness; when Mrs. Marsh tried to pour a little water between her clenched teeth her head fell back on the kind woman's shoulder. She had fainted. And it

seemed to the onlookers that her awakening from that swoon would be in another world.

She was just alive when the outward-bound steamer *Venetian* was sighted, and the miserable shipwrecked creatures were generously welcomed on board her. Miss Lindsay looked like death when she was carried on to the deck, and the one feeling among the lady passengers was deep compassion for the beautiful girl who had had such a narrow escape from a watery grave. She roused a little before they got to Aden, and was able to be asked her own wishes. Would she go on in the ship to India and rejoin her brother-in-law, or would she return by the next homeward-bound steamer to England?

She never hesitated.

"There is no one who wants me in India, and I shall never have a happy moment until I know my darling's fate."

Mrs. Marsh had remarked on board the *Atalanta* that the sisters never spoke of each other by their Christian name, even when fairly intimate with their fellow passengers they had generally said "My sister" when speaking of each other, and even in all the peril of the shipwreck they had kept up this custom. Mrs. Marsh did not know Miss Lindsay's "first" name even now. Nothing could have exceeded the kindness shown them when they embarked on the *Orontes*, and Mr. Marsh's joy on meeting his wife was unbounded. A telegram from Brindisi had reported the *Atalanta* as overdue, and he had been terribly anxious, even while not dreaming of the extremity of her peril.

Idonee revived quickly now she knew that every day was bearing her towards England; but her future filled her with the deepest anxiety. If Nan lived, why, then all would be well. She trusted her sister so implicitly that she felt sure Nan would make all smooth for her, she had such faith in Nan's powers that she believed it would even induce the Trefusis family not to believe the evil Mr. Adair might say of her.

But if Nan were dead?

The thought was terrible.

Apart from her real love for her sister, and the awful remorse that must pursue her for having been indirectly the cause of her death Idonee felt that without Nan her own future must for all time be a shadowed one. In a moment of childish impatience she had forced Nan to change identities with her. If all were over with her sister Sir Denzil must be thinking himself a widower, while his family would even now, perhaps, be rejoicing that he was free from his foolish child wife.

How could Idonee go to Trefusis and confess to her unknown relations that she was their son and brother's wife. How could she tell her stately mother-in-law (Idonee always imagined Lady Mary very proud and haughty) that she had masqueraded on the voyage as a single girl. How could she possibly say she had made the journey as "Miss Lindsay," when James Adair intended to represent to the Trefusis family the very shameful conduct of that said Miss Lindsay, first in winning his affection and then jilting him, later in sending her sister to meet certain death rather than lose a trinket. If shame had overwhelmed her when Adair first proposed to her that she, a wife and mother, should accept an offer of marriage, that was as nothing compared to the over-bearing burden of humiliation it would have been to confess to Lady Mary Trefusis that she had actually taken off her wedding-ring and denied her wifehood.

In those days when good Mrs. Marsh thought her sister's peril the girl's only trouble, Idonee went almost wild with anxiety about her own future. She was so young you see. So utterly unfitted to cope with poverty or fight her own battles, and yet it seemed to her that by one fatal step she had lost her name and her rightful home for ever.

Well, Denzil had said he regretted their marriage, if Nan were dead he would be free now and able to marry Alice Grant.

Idonee could not help a thrill of pain then; she positively hated Alice Grant. It was not a Christian sentiment, but then, poor little thing, she never set up to be a faultless paragon, she was just a living, loving, suffering, human

creature, and as such it added to her grief very really to fancy Alice as some day mistress of her pretty home at Dolerabad.

"I won't think of it," she decided at last, "I can't. Surely Heaven will be merciful and let Nan live."

One terrible experience was spared Idonee. She was not penniless. When she left her own home to go to her uncle's, some strange caprice had made her take all her money with her. Before Nan came out Wells—who knew her lady's carelessness in money matters—had persuaded Idonee that over a hundred pounds was far too much to carry in her purse during the voyage. The faithful maid had prevailed on her mistress to let her make a little bag just large enough to hold the roll of bank-notes, and sew it securely inside her corsets, leaving only a few sovereigns in her purse.

Idonee was to be thankful for Wells' prudence. Her purse, with all its contents, had been left in the cabin, but the roll of notes was safe on her person when she left the *Atalanta*, and would, she calculated, even after the expense of an overland journey from Brindisi, support her for several weeks.

She took Mrs. Marsh partly into her confidence, as without her aid she could hardly have carried out her plans. She told the kindly matron that if her sister were dead she should not attempt to force herself upon the Trefusis family. As Mr. Adair was intimate with them, and had threatened to give them his own version of Miss Lindsay's conduct she felt that the best course was to avoid them. If she left the ship at Brindisi, by calling at the steam company's offices there she could doubtless hear how many of the passengers of the *Atalanta* had escaped, or going on to London she could obtain the fullest details from the authorities there. Anyway, the overland journey would save her some days of agonizing suspense.

"It will cost you a good bit," said Mrs. Marsh, prudently, "but I won't deny that in your place I should do just the same, and Miss Lindsay, my dear, you may trust me for one thing, if your sister's relations come to meet the ship (which they may do hoping for news of her) I'll just tell them how abominably young Adair has treated you, and that as a respectable married woman, with girls of her own, I saw nothing in your conduct from first to last in the least unbecoming a young lady."

She and her husband did more than mere words for the poor girl; they happened to have an acquaintance domiciled at Brindisi, and they gave Miss Lindsay a letter to this lady, begging her to befriend the lonely traveller by every means in her power.

When she stood safe on dry ground, Idonee's first feeling was that she would never, never trust herself at sea again. Her next an eager longing for the certainty that should end her suspense. It was then fully four weeks since she had quitted the doomed steamer. Surely in that time news must have come of its passengers' fate, and she made her way to the office with a strange yearning for good news.

Nothing could have been kinder than the agent's manner when she introduced herself to his notice, but his news was not reassuring. "Only two boats were launched safely—the ship had three—but the largest of all was swamped before she could be got afloat."

"I know," and Idonee's face blanched at the recollection. "I, myself, left in the first boat that really started. My sister, if saved, must have had a place in the second. Lady Trefusis."

"Lady Trefusis!" exclaimed the agent. "I wish I had better news for you, Miss Lindsay, the only consolation left you is the thought that her last action was one of almost divine self-sacrifice. The second boat was launched and ready to start when it was discovered the daughter of one of the women in it had been left behind on account of its crowded state. The mother was almost frantic, and Lady Trefusis, rather than she and her child should be parted, gave up her place to the daughter." Idonee's eyes were bright with enthusiasm at that moment, she forgot herself and thought only of Nan.

"It was just like her," she breathed, "my

sister never thought of herself. But oh, I feel as if I hated that girl for robbing her of her chance of life."

The agent uttered no reproof. Perhaps he understood the feeling which prompted the words too well.

"It was a useless sacrifice," he said, gently, "the boat met with bad weather, starvation and other hardships pressed cruelly on those on board her. Of all who left the ship, only two sailors were rescued to tell the tale. They called here on their way to England, and I had the story I have told you from their own lips."

"And there was no hope for my sister," cried Idonie, "wrecks last a long while sometimes, and some ship might have passed. Must I give up all hope?"

The agent shook his head.

"I wish I could say no. To me, to all ordinary people, Lady Trefusis's death seems a certainty. There is one thing that may comfort you, she could have suffered no long drawn out agony through privation or other hardship. The sailors who came here declared that within a few hours of leaving the *Atlanta* they heard the report of a loud explosion, and for a long space the sky was red with a lurid glow. There is no doubt that when the fire reached that part of the hold where the gunpowder was stored the vessel was literally blown to pieces, and death must have been instantaneous for all on board."

"Then I have lost her," cried poor Idonie, in blank despair.

The agent was kindness itself, he begged Miss Lindsay to come to his own house and he would himself see her off in the mail train for England; but Idonie declined, she said that her suspense ended she was no longer in a hurry to reach her native land. A friend had given her a letter of introduction to Mrs. Gresham, and she should like to present it.

The Greshams received her as though she had been an invited guest, and hearing of her wish to return to England quietly, unmet and unwelcomed, they did their best to further her desire.

"As one of the survivors of a wreck you would be quite a heroine," the clergyman told her kindly, "and be interviewed by all sorts of people, but I think I understand your feelings perfectly. You have suffered too terribly in the past to wish to recall your experience for the amusement of curious strangers. Spend a week or two quietly here with us, and then I will take your ticket in one of the mail trains and see you off. If you stay a night or so at Dover no one need ever know you were on the *Atlanta*, and you will be spared all trouble with inquisitive people."

Mrs. Gresham was much the same figure and build as Idonie, and she insisted on giving her such articles of clothing as would spare her all comments on her wardrobe. Miss Lindsay had simply nothing of her own except the things she had worn in the boat and a plain black travelling dress procured for her in Aden. It would be March when she reached England, and probably still cold, so Mrs. Gresham gave her a cloak and a small toque, besides sufficient articles of attire to fill a small portmanteau. She would not hear Idonie's thanks.

"If ever it is in your power to do a kindness to a lonely girl you can 'pass on' what you are pleased to call my 'goodness,'" she said, smiling, "and if ever you need a friend, if ever Mr. Gresham or I can do anything for you, you have only to let us know."

The journey began so long ago under her uncle's care ended for Idonie at Dover, for she took the clergyman's advice and did not go on to London. She took two small rooms in a quiet side street, and there tried to collect her thoughts and decide on her next step.

She gave the name of "Lester" to her landlady; it was the first that occurred to her. Trefusis and Lindsay were alike impossible if she wished to keep herself hidden from her husband's family. Lester was short and unremarkable, not common enough to suggest its having been chosen as a disguise, but too ordinary for any inquisitive people to inquire if she were related to this or that family of the same name. When she came to think it over, Idonie

remembered that Nan's chief friend had been called Lester, but this had nothing to do with her choice of it, which was purely accidental.

It was easy to see a file of the *Times* for the last two months, and after she had carefully perused every allusion to the *Atlanta*, the last ray of hope died in Idonie's heart.

It was impossible, simply impossible, that Nan survived. For all time Idonie must live out her life without her sister, and alas! Nan's death meant that never while life lasted could poor Lady Trefusis resume her rightful name.

She was as cut off from her husband as though death had already claimed her. She must live on, and perhaps see another woman in her place.

Idonie's punishment seemed harder than she could bear, and she was as well and strong, there seemed no chance of death coming to end her griefs. She, who had left India in such delicate health, that her husband feared she would never be quite her old self; she, who had gone through enough since to kill ten ordinary women, seemed by some mysterious power to be only strengthened and braced by all her suffering.

The pretty bride, the spolli girl-wife of Dolerabad, had given place to a noble, generous-minded woman, a woman who longed to do her part bravely in life's great field, who had put away childish things, who, in a word like Undine in the beautiful old German story, had found her soul.

If only she had been sure of her husband's love, Idonie might have written and told Sir Denzil all. As it was, she feared her waywardness had worn out his affection, that he would be relieved rather than grieved at his freedom. A calm, demure woman of the world (perhaps Alice Grant herself) would suit him far better than Idonie, besides, how could she tell Denzil everything when Jim Adair might already have told the whole Trefusis family of the misdeeds of "Miss Lindsay"?

Idonie at first made no plans for her future. She was too stunned; but with the return of health and strength she awoke to the consciousness that she could not live for ever without earning money, that humble as was her abode, and her way of life, a hundred pounds would not last much over a year, and it would be wiser to increase her little hoard before it quite melted away.

It happened that when searching the advertisements, she read one that took her fancy. A young lady was required in a clergyman's family to teach two little children and help their mother in household matters. No experience was necessary, but references were required. Oddly enough the address given was in Dover. It came to Idonie with a rush that Mrs. Gresham would be willing to speak in her favour without mentioning her real name. She would understand the girl's wish to drop the rather sensational associations of the past. Idonie might, at least, call on the advertiser, and confessing she had never been "out" before, refer her to the wife of an English clergyman on the Continent for testimony as to her respectability.

(To be continued.)

THE inhabitants of the Nicobar Islands, a group in the Indian Ocean, have an extraordinary fancy for old hats, and a regular trade in such cast-off head-gear is carried on between Calcutta and Nicobar, the much desired head-pieces being paid for in cocoanuts. A tall chimney-pot is the favourite among the Nicobarans, and the scene of fashion is considered to be a high white hat with black band. This is worth from fifty to sixty cocoanuts, and is worn by the Nicobarian dandy when he goes out fishing, the rest of his attire consisting solely of a waistcloth.

**CHRONIC INDIGESTION** and its attendant Misery and Suffering Cured with Tonic "Docrax" (purely vegetable), 2*lb.*, from Chemists, &c., post free from Dr. HORN, "Glandower," Bournemouth. Sample bottle and pamphlet, with Analytical Reports, &c., 6 Stamps.

## POPPY'S ROMANCE.

—:—

(Continued from page 465.)

A hard task for Sir Ernest Landon. Still, it was the last request from the dying lips, and must not be disregarded.

Murmuring softly but cheerfully,—

"I forgive you, Adeline," the man arose, and approaching the bed, laid his lips upon the poor drawn ones so eagerly uplifted to his.

A smile of perfect happiness flooded the heiress's countenance, as she whispered forth,—

"My love! my love!"

Then the brown eyes closed, the grey head fell heavily to the pillow again, and with one gentle sigh Adeline Merton's spirit fled from earth!

And Sir Ernest Landon was alone with the dead!

Far away, in sunny Italy, Sir Ernest Landon met again his love. Let us follow them thither.

It was about nine o'clock in the evening. In a spacious and brilliantly-lit room sat Poppy Ralston—Hugo Ralston's fair young widow—sat with flushed face bent low over a magnificent bouquet of pure white flowers, which she held in one hand, while in the other was a small white card with fanciful letters engraved thereon.

Poppy Ralston surveyed each in turn, while her face flushed more and more, and the light in her violet eyes grew more and more brilliant and tender.

For the sight of these white blossoms recalled to her sweet memories of days—the happiest of her life—but now so long ago!

"We shall meet again, and very soon!" she murmured, as she glanced again at the characters on the card in her hand. "Yes, we shall meet again—and then. Ah! I will take these with me to-night in case I meet him."

Rising, she advanced to a small table near by, and unlocked a drawer, and took forth a small packet, which she hid carefully away among the folds of the rich lace on her dress.

Scarcely had she again seated herself ere the heavy velvet curtains of the *portière* were drawn wide, and Lady Lennox entered.

"Dressed, Poppy? That is right. But what lovely flowers! Ah, I can guess who is their sender!" smilingly added Lady Lennox, as she drew nearer her daughter and seated herself on a couch.

"Can you, mamma?" replied the young widow. "I am afraid you may be mistaken, for I have never met Sir Ernest Landon in your presence."

"Sir Ernest Landon!" almost screamed Lady Lennox. "Why, Poppy, surely you will not reject the Prince for a mere English baronet!"

"Prince Galassi has never yet done me the honour of asking for my hand, mamma; therefore I am free, as far as he is concerned, to accept another's love," calmly replied our heroine.

"Tut, tut, Poppy. You know as well as I do that you are the only woman the Prince cares for; and now I must betray his secret, and tell you that he has always asked my permission to woo you, and that he intends this very night, at the Embassy Ball, to speak to you of his love. Ah, child, surely you would not be foolish enough to reject such a suitor!"

Poppy Ralston found a minute for reflection before replying. Meanwhile her eyes wandered to where lay her bouquet—his flowers.

Strengthened by the sight of their innocent petals she rose, and crossing to her mother's side knelt low there; and taking her mother's hand within hers said, with pretty penitent look on her happy face, and with sweet, entreating smile,—

"Mamma dear, do not urge me to again marry a man for whom I do not care. And do not be vexed with me if I say that I do not think the Prince will be quite inconsolable when I tell him that I have no love to bestow upon him. For—mamma, dear, you are sure you will not be vexed! But I heard him tell his brother, the Count, that he really did not know which he

admired the most—the mother or the daughter! Of course he did not know I was near, for a curtain hid me from his sight. The daughter he cannot have, but—"

"So no more, Poppy. Of course he will be very vexed when he hears your decision, and I shall feel it my duty to do my best to console him," smilingly replied Lady Lennox.

Her vanity was gratified; and she inwardly determined that it should not be her fault if she were not some day mistress at the Hotel di Galazzi, so rich in its velvet hangings and costly curries.

"We can winter with you whenever you wish it, mamma, dear," continued her daughter, putting up her pretty flushed face for a kiss.

Lady Lennox bestowed it; and then tapping the golden head with her jewelled fan, replied,—

"I do not know that I shall want you, then, Poppy!"

"Ah, yes, you will, mamma, more than ever," answered Poppy Ralston, rising quickly as the *portière* was swung aside, and a servant announced the carriage in waiting to take them to the evening's festivities. An hour later and Poppy Ralston was threading the crowded ball-room upon the arm of Sir Ernest Landon.

"A little more of this crush, and then we shall be free to talk over old times, Poppy!" remarked the latter, as he skilfully guided his fair companion through the brilliant crowd towards a small doorway.

Through the same, and down a nearer way, bordered on either side by flowering plants and delicate ferns; and then—

"Once again we meet, Poppy!" broke from Sir Ernest's lips, as he placed himself by the side of the woman he so loved, in the small, dingy-lit recess to which he had led her.

His companion replied not; but her fingers played nervously at the pure white flowers she carried.

"Poppy, are you willing to listen to my tale? Have you thought so very harshly of me ever since that night when I bade you farewell at your aunt's garden-gate at Bourton—so long ago? For it has seemed very, very long ago to me; and I have been true to you ever since, Poppy; for I loved you so dearly!"

"And I loved you all the time, Ernest; but I thought—at least I had a letter telling me that you were—"

"I know all, Poppy. Do not let us talk of that now. She who wrought all the mischief is dead."

"I know now that it was not true, and that you did not send it. But tell me all, Ernest!"

"First tell me that you love me still, Poppy. Oh, my darling! I have so longed for this meeting, that it would be cruel to shatter all my hopes! Poppy, you will be mine, will you not, darling?"

Very, very sweet looked Poppy Ralston, as she glanced up with such violet eyes into her lover's handsome face, and made reply.—

"Ernest, I have tried not to love you so much, for my love for you has been more than I could control at times. My marriage with Hugo Ralston was but a dream. I felt so stunned when I received that cruel letter that I cared not for anyone or anything, and consented to a marriage with the man who had saved my life, simply because, for the time, I believed you false. And it grieved me very much. Still I loved you. And now, Ernest—oh! Ernest, Ernest!—never leave me now! I could not bear another parting," sobbed our heroine, as she laid her fair head against her lover's breast, and felt his kisses on her lips.

"We will never part again in this life, Poppy—my own darling!" murmured Sir Ernest, clasping to him the form of the only woman he had ever loved.

"Now tell me all, please."

"Why distress yourself with the sad tale, Poppy?"

"I would rather hear it, Ernest dear."

So sitting, hand clasped in hand, Sir Ernest obeyed.

"Poppy, I left my father's house because I would not wed the woman he had chosen for me. I had met you but once then, but my heart was

fixed. I did not explain all this to my father, but I was firm in my refusal to wed her. And so I was exiled from my home; and at once I repaired to Bourton—your home. My father expired the very eve upon which he had sent to his solicitor to alter the will in favour of her, and thus disinherited his only son.

"So I succeeded to my lawful rights. I immediately hastened back to my darling's home, only, alas! to find from dear Mrs. Butler that my darling Poppy had been claimed by her mother, and carried away to foreign shores. The next news that reached me was that my love was about to wed with another. I determined to try my chance once again, and so I sent the flowers, and attended Lady Lennox's receptions. All in vain! But we will dwell no longer upon the past, my darling."

"But the letter, Ernest?"

"Was sent by her with whom I refused to wed, Poppy."

"And her name was Adeline Merton?" quietly asked Poppy Ralston.

Sir Ernest started slightly.

"Who told you, Poppy?"

"I guessed it, Ernest," was the simple reply; and he questioned no further.

"You are right, Poppy. She worked all the mischief, and brought upon us all the sorrow we have endured; but she was sorry before she died, and I forgave her, Poppy. Yes, I forgave her! I was sure my darling would wish me so to do, and it will only enhance our happiness to reflect that her spirit was set at rest by a few words of forgiveness from the lips of those she had so cruelly wronged. Poor Adeline!"

"She is dead, Ernest?"

"Yes, dear. I was with her when she breathed her last. It was her urgent wish, and I could not refuse."

Silence fell for a few seconds, while each seemed to be wrapt in contemplation of the present happiness.

Then Sir Ernest spoke again.

"Poppy, do you know I have not yet felt your soft lips against mine! Will not my darling bestow one kiss on one who has so longed for this moment?"

Instead of at once complying, Poppy Ralston drew from the folds of her costly dress a small packet, and, divesting it of its outside wrappings, drew forth a knot of brown, withered flowers.

"Ernest!" she whispered, "you have forgotten our compact with respect to these, but I have not. Take them, and when you have properly returned them to me, I will—"

"Dear little flowers!" broke in Sir Ernest, as he raised them to his lips, then gave them into the small hand stretched out to receive them.

At the same instant the lovers' lips met in one long passionate kiss.

"Poppy, what did you think of me for thus returning your flowers?" asked Sir Ernest, gazing lovingly into his love's face.

"I tried hard to remember that I had promised to be the wife of Hugo Ralston, and to forget that I still loved you as much as ever, Ernest!"

"My darling! I did not dare approach you to address you, for I felt that you belonged to another. But, oh! Poppy, none can ever know what were my feelings as I turned away and sought your mother and bade her a hurried farewell. I could not long remain under the same roof as yourself, knowing that we could only meet as strangers! Ah, Adeline, Adeline! your hatred was greater than your love!" concluded Sir Ernest, in low, bitter tones.

"And yet you forgave her, Ernest?" questioned his companion, glancing up at his face, now stern and hard-looking as he dwelt on the wrong done him by a woman's hand.

"Poppy, it was her dying request, and I could not but comply. It is useless to reflect now upon the wrong she dealt us, but for a moment I forgot that I am once again with you, my darling! I shall soon forget, in present happiness, all the woes and miseries of the dark past, and shall but live for your happiness, my darling!"

A lovely evening in soft, balmy May. Already the roses are blooming in the sheltered corners chosen for them at Leigh Towers. Deep, crimson-headed ones, mingled with the pure white, shed their soft fragrance around as they slumbered while the clear, pale moonlight shone down upon them. Very, very fair looked the grounds at Leigh Towers as they lay all bathed in the moon's soft radiance. Very, very fair, and very bewitching; and so thought the lovely woman leaning on the arm of her husband, as she threaded her way through narrow alleys and winding walks, and lifted her delicate evening robes from the dewy grass as she emerged forth on to the lawn.

"And what does my wife think of her new home?" tenderly asked Sir Ernest Landon, as he bent down and glanced lovingly into the fair face, partially hidden by the soft azure wraps sheltering the golden head from the dewy night air.

"I have never seen anything so beautiful!" replied the young bride, letting her violet eyes wander from smooth, even lawns to distant leafy avenues and flowery beds, and then back to her husband's handsome face and loving eyes.

"I am glad my darling likes it!" was all the latter replied.

"And, Ernest, you could leave all this for me?" whispered the young bride, presently, as they stood near the grand old elm and faced the grey stone manor—Sir Ernest Landon's ancestral home.

"My darling!" the enraptured husband made response, "I would gladly leave it again to-morrow if my Poppy were not here to cheer it with her presence. Ah, Poppy! you can never picture to yourself the long and dreary hours spent within these walls—a dreariness that was only relieved by the sight of a few withered flowers, and the remembrance of a sweet face framed in golden hair! And then came the time when I knew it was forbidden me to remember even this much of the happy days of the past. And then came darkness and dreariness in very truth! But all is past now, and henceforth we will but endeavour to be happy, and put aside for ever the days caused us both by a woman's revenge.

[THE END.]

## IF I BUT KNEW.

—10—

### CHAPTER XVIII.

Faint and heart-sick, Rhoda crept down the broad stone steps of the elegant mansion, and wended her way back to her humble lodgings. Just as she was about to touch the bell, a man ran hastily up the steps.

"Well, well, I declare!" he exclaimed. "I am at the wrong house. But in this confounded row one house is so like the other that one cannot help making a mistake now and then."

With a gasp Rhoda reeled backward. At the very first word he had uttered, Rhoda had recognized the man's voice.

It was Horace Tempest, the manager of the typewriting office.

The sentence had scarcely left his lips when he recognized her.

"Aha!" he cried, a fierce imprecation accompanying the words. "So it's you, Rhoda Cairn!" he added, catching her fiercely by the cloak. "So I have found you at last!"

She was too frightened to reply.

"So this is where you are stopping, is it? Come, walk as far as the end of the street with me. I want to talk with you."

"No," cried Rhoda, struggling to free herself from his grasp. "I have nothing to say to you, nor will I listen to you!"

"We shall see about that presently," he cried. "Horace Tempest is not a man to be hauled in this way by a little girl. You shall listen to me!"

Feb. 26, 1898.

Rhoda reached out her hand quickly to touch the bell, but he anticipated the movement, and caught her arm roughly.

She tried to cry out, but no sound issued from her lips.

She had already gone through more than her overstrained nerves could bear. Without a cry or a moan, she sank in a dead faint at his feet.

Gathering her up in his arms, Horace Tempest sprang quickly down the steps. For a moment he stood there with his helpless burden in his arms.

"This is quite an unexpected go," he muttered, standing there undecided for a moment. "I must leave her here a moment, that is certain, while I run for a cab."

He placed Rhoda on the lower step, in a sitting position, and darted down the street in the direction of a cab-stand.

He did not see the open window of an adjoining house, because of the closed blind which protected it, nor the crouching form of the woman behind it, who had heard and witnessed all.

Like a flash she caught up her hat, which was lying on an adjacent table, and sprang out of the door.

"I knew he would come to see her at last!" she said, fairly blushing the words. "They have had a quarrel. That is why he has stayed away so long. He has gone after a cab to take her elsewhere. But I will stop his little game!" cried Belle Andrews, for it was she. "I shall take a terrible revenge upon him by striking him through her."

Taking a short cut to a nearer cab stand, she hailed the first vehicle. The man sprang down from his box.

"Why, is that you, Belle?" he cried, in unfeigned surprise.

"Yes, Joe," she answered, quickly. "I want your cab for awhile."

In a few words she told him of a woman lying on the steps of the house next to her—a woman whom she wished to befriend.

"I want you to take her to a certain place. I will tell you about it when we start. Come quickly and help me to get her into your cab."

This was accomplished in less time than it takes to tell it.

"Where to, Belle?" asked the driver, as he picked up the reins.

When she told him he started back in wonder.

"Why in the world are you taking her there?" he exclaimed, in dismay.

"Make no comments," she replied, angrily; "but drive on as fast as you can. I wouldn't take her there unless it was all right."

"Oh, of course," returned the driver. "I am not saying but that you know what you're doing. But she seems mighty quiet for that kind of a person."

They had scarcely turned the first corner ere Horace Tempest drove up in a cab.

"By thunder! she has vanished!" he exclaimed, excitedly, looking in astonishment at the spot where he had left her a short time before. "She must have fled into the house," he muttered. "Well, cabby, here's your fee; any how. You may as well go back."

For some moments Horace Tempest stood quite still and looked up at the house.

"Of all places in the world, who would have expected to find her here—next door to Belle? It's certain that Belle does not know of it. She could not keep it if she did. Well, this is a pretty how d'ya do—two riva's living next door to each other. Belle is expecting me to call on her this evening. If it were not for that, I wouldn't show up as all, I'm so upset by that little beauty, Rhoda Cairn."

Very slowly he walked up the steps of the adjoining house and pulled the bell. To his great surprise, he learned that Belle was out.

"She will be sure to be back presently," added the girl who answered the bell. "Won't you come in and wait?"

"No," he answered, glad of the excuse. "I'll run in some evening during the week."

With that he turned on his heel and walked rapidly away.

Meanwhile, the cab bearing Belle Andrews and

the still unconscious Rhoda rolled quickly onward, and stopped at length before a red-brick building on the outskirts of the town.

Rhoda's swoon lasted so long that even Belle grew frightened.

"Wait," she said to the driver, "I shall have to step in first and see if they will receive her."

After fully five minutes had elapsed, the door opened and a tall man looked out.

"It is I, doctor," said Belle Andrews. "May I step inside? I want to speak to you. I have a patient waiting outside the gate."

"Dear me! is it really you? You come at rather a late hour. Still, you know you are a privileged person here."

"I ought to be, since I have learned so many secrets about the place and yourself," she said, "when I was nurse here."

" Didn't I give you five hundred pounds to insure secrecy when you left here?"

"Well, I kept my promise. I never told anything, did I?"

"Let me understand what you want," he said, abruptly. "Did I understand you to say that there was a patient outside?"

The girl nodded.

"Is does not matter who or what she is," she said, tersely. "It is the desire of her friends that she be kept here for a few months. I suppose you are anxious to know about the pay?"

"Of course. That's where my interest comes in," she said.

"Well, I will be responsible for it," she said.

"You?" he said, amazed.

"Yes; why not?" she returned.

He looked at her with something like doubt.

"You dare not refuse to accept her!" she declared.

"Do you mean that for a threat?" he exclaimed, fiercely.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I cannot be held accountable for the way in which you take my assertion," she declared.

The frown deepened on the man's face.

"For convenience' sake, we will say that the girl is an opium-eater, and that is why you are keeping her under such strict surveillance."

The man muttered some strange, unintelligible remark.

"I suppose the cabman will help me in with the girl?" he said, harshly.

"Of course," replied Belle Andrews, impatiently.

The girl's figure was so light that "the doctor," as he termed himself, found little difficulty in bringing her into the house without aid.

Belle Andrews stood in the hall-way, and followed him into the reception-room, where he laid the girl down upon a rude couch. She watched him as he threw back the long dark veil, and cried out in wonder at the marvellous beauty of the still white face—the face so like chiselled marble.

"How young and how very lovely!" he remarked; and as he spoke, he unfolded the long dark cloak that enveloped her.

A sharp exclamation broke from his lips, and he turned round suddenly.

"Belle Andrews!" he said.

But the look of astonishment that he saw on her face was as great as his own bore. Belle's look of astonishment quickly gave way to one of the most intense hatred; ay, a very demon of rage seemed to have taken possession of her.

"I wonder that you brought her here," said the doctor.

But Belle was speechless. She was gazing like one turned to stone upon the face of the girl whom she believed to be her rival.

"I have a double reason for hating her now," she said, under her breath, clinching her hands so tightly that her nails cut deep into her palms. But she did not even feel the pain.

"I say, I wonder that you brought her here," repeated the doctor.

"I knew of no better place," she replied, turning her eyes uneasily away from him. "You must not refuse to receive her."

"Who is she?" he asked.

"I refuse to answer your question," she replied, grimly. "You know only this about her: She is a confirmed opium-eater. One who is very

much interested in her brought her here to be treated by you. She is to be kept here, under strict watch, to prevent her getting away. If she writes any letters they are to be forwarded to me."

And thus it happened that when Rhoda opened her troubled eyes, after the doctor and an attendant had worked over her for upward of an hour, she found herself in a strange room, with strange faces bending over her. She looked blankly up at them.

"The waves are very high," she moaned. "Come back on the beach, girls," she murmured.

"She is out of her head," exclaimed the doctor, turning nervously to his attendant. "I ought not to have taken this girl in," he continued, in alarm. "I fear we shall have no end of trouble with her. This looks like a long and lingering illness."

"She is so young, and as fair as a flower," murmured the attendant, bending over her. "I feel very sorry for her. If a fever should happen to set in, do you think it would prove fatal to her?" she asked, eagerly.

"In nine cases out of ten—yes," he replied, brusquely.

At the very hour that this conversation was taking place, Kenward Monk, the scape-grace, was ascending the brown-stone steps of the Drummonds' house.

"I will take beautiful Mabel and her stately mamma to the ball to-night," he mused, under his breath. "Before we return, I will have proposed to the haughty beauty. Trust me for that. They think I am the heir of my uncle, who died recently, and—curse him!—left all his wealth to my gentlemanly cousin, even making him change his name to that of Owen Courtney, that the outside world might not confound it with mine. Yet, I will marry beautiful Mabel Drummond, and live a life of luxury!"

In that moment there rose before his mental vision the sweet, sad face of beautiful Rhoda Cairn, the fair young girl whom he had wronged so cruelly and then deserted so heartlessly.

## CHAPTER XIX.

THE servant who answered the bell at that moment put a stop to Kenward Monk's musings.

He had only a few moments to wait in the drawing room before Miss Drummond appeared.

She looked so lovely in her beautiful ball-dress that his eyes glowed and his heart beat. Before he had an opportunity to utter the words that were on his lips, the young girl's mother entered the drawing room.

She was so gay and bright with him, that the mother wondered vaguely if she had forgotten the story which she had told her concerning him.

The warning glance which she gave her daughter reminded her that she must act decorously.

The girl was very much in love, and it was easy enough for her to forgive him for having had another sweetheart.

He accompanied mother and daughter to the grand ball. "He was so gay and so brilliant and so witty, that he charmed the beautiful Miss Drummond more than ever, and he knew by her smiles that his efforts were not in vain."

Kenward Monk was shrewd enough to always try to find a widow woman's daughter to make love to, and more especially those who had no male relatives to inquire into his antecedents.

Here he found an heiress with only a mother and brother, and the brother had, most fortunately, business that took him abroad.

Monk promised himself that before his return he would have wooed and won his sister—the potted Mabel—the beauty of the season.

The ball was a most aristocratic affair. The Upper Ten were out in force. Kenward Monk was the only poor man there; but they never would have guessed it.

More than one had read that little notice about Monk having been left a fortune, and of course supposed this man the one alluded to, and more than one anxious father and mother of marriageable daughters were in consequence exceedingly

pleasant to him, despite the fact that he seemed very much engrossed with Mabel Drummond.

Monk was the very poetry of motion. It was a dream of delight to Mabel Drummond as they made the round of the magnificent ball-room, with his arms clasped about her, his handsome face so near her own.

"Come into the conservatory, Mabel," he whispered; "I have something to tell you."

How strange it was the scene and the occasion did not cause him to remember that other scene and that other girl whom he had once brought into the conservatory to listen to words of burning love!

"Mabel," he whispered, "I have something to tell you. Will you listen to me?"

"Yes," she said, her heart beating furiously, for, woman-like, she knew what was coming. The lovely colour on her cheeks deepened, and the girl's blue eyes grew luminous and tender.

"Mabel," he cried, "how shall I tell you what I have to say! Oh, Mabel, let me tell it quickly, lest my courage fails! I love you, dear, as I have never loved any one in my life before!"

Looking into the dark, handsome face of the young man before her, Mabel Drummond saw that she was in the presence of a mighty passion—a great love.

In an instant he was kneeling by her side, his whole soul in his eyes and on his lips. It was the very first time in his life that Kenward Monk's heart was ever stirred with love.

If Mabel Drummond had even been poor, he would have cared for her. He started by wanting the girl for her money; it ended by his wanting her for herself.

He caught the little hand in his that was carrying the beautiful bouquet of roses he had sent her, and held it tightly.

"Thank Heaven," he said, "the time has come at last, my beautiful love, for which I have waited so long. Surely you know what I have to tell you, Mabel!" he said, drawing back and looking at her.

"I haven't the least idea," declared the girl, in whom the spirit of coquetry was strong. "Really, I do not understand."

"There needs no understanding, my beautiful love!" he cried. "None! I have come to tell you in words what I have already told you a hundred times in a hundred different ways—I love you with all my heart! I love you! I know no other words. There are none which can tell how dearly or how much all my heart, my soul, my life goes out in those few words—I love you."

The very vehemence of his passion startled her. A very flame of love seemed to glow in his face. His eyes were full of fire.

He was looking with wistful, longing eyes into her face.

"I have known many beautiful women, many have smiled upon me, but your face is the only one that has ever haunted me. It is because of this—because my heart has been cold and hard to all others that it is so devoted to you. Do not turn away, Mabel, until you have heard me through. If you will love me, if you will but marry me, there will be no limit to my ambition."

He paused for a moment, overcome by the vehemence of his own words.

She had been told over and over again by her mother to days gone by never to let a man see how much she cared for him, even if he were proposing. She had been brought up in the world's fashionable school, where every emotion of the heart is concealed by a calm exterior.

Her eyes drooped that he might not see the soft mellow light of the love that stirred her soul and was shining in them.

He looked at the white, calm, exquisite face, and the soul within him trembled.

"If I lose you, Mabel," he whispered, "I shall go mad; but I should not be the first man who has gone mad for a woman's sake. You can make of me what you will. If you send me from you I shall be adrift for life. But you will not do that, Mabel," he cried. "You would not encourage me if you had intended to throw me over. If you sent me away from you, if you took from me the hope of winning you, you would kill

the best part of me. But I could not believe it. You would not be so cruel!"

His voice died away in a whisper.

"I have a true and serious friendship for you, Mr. Monk," she answered, coyly; "but I—I have never thought of such a thing as love or marriage."

"Will you think of it now?" he answered, eagerly.

He loved her all the more for this sweet, womanly, modest hesitation.

"My darling," he said, "I believe you do care a little for me, that you like me better than even you yourself dreamed. You know how the gardeners take a small shoot, plant it, and cherish it until it grows into a stately tree; so will I take this liking, this sweet preference you have shown me, and cherish it until it grows into a mighty and beautiful love."

She shook her head.

"You must believe me," she said; "I have not thought of love or marriage."

His face grew pale, his eyes grew dim, as though the very light of his soul had gone out. He stopped one moment and looked at her.

"You say you have not thought of loving me," he said, slowly. "Then what have you meant by giving me the sweetest glances that woman ever gave to man? If they did not mean love, what did they mean?"

He spoke so quickly, so passionately, that the girl was half-frightened. He saw it.

"Mabel," he said, hoarsely, "if I have been too hasty with my declaration of love, forgive me! I thought you must have seen for weeks past that I had no thought save you. You must have known that I not only loved, but that I worshipped you. If I have been too hasty, take a little time to think it over, Mabel—a week, a fortnight, even a month, I could endure to be on the rack, as long as hope shines like a beacon-light ahead of me."

She arose from the seat near the fountain where he had placed her.

"Well, let us rest in that way," she answered. "I'll refer the subject to mamma; but you are not to say one word of love to me, nor speak to her about the matter for at least two months."

"Mabel, you are cruel," he cried, "to keep me so long in suspense. Tell me, at least, that if your mother favours my suit, I may hope that you are not indifferent to me."

But she would not answer him. Her heart beat high, the fever of love throbbed in her veins; but, like all well-bred young girls, she had been schooled by early training to make no sign of preference for any man at his first avowal of affection. As he led her from the conservatory, past the fountain, the fragrant water-lilies, past the green palms and the flowering orchids, he gave a terrible start.

In that moment there came to him the memory of Rhoda. He was annoyed by the very thought of her in that hour, and he quickly put it from him.

When they returned to the ball-room, Mabel was as sweet as ever; but neither by word nor by sign did she betray any remembrance of the scene which had just occurred in the conservatory.

He had always been used to having young girls fall desperately in love with him. The indifference of the beautiful Mabel Drummond piqued him. For the very first time in his life he was madly in love. The thought never occurred to him that an angry Providence might bring vengeance upon him for his cruelty to Rhoda. He never once asked himself, while he was dancing amid the lights and flowers, what had become of her.

It never once occurred to him that she was in London. He had often said to himself that in all probability she had taken the very first train to her country home and was there still.

He never allowed himself to think long upon the subject, but dismissed it from his mind as quickly as possible.

Now, why should the memory of Rhoda have come to him on this evening of all others, when he was in the company of the girl he loved?

He left Mabel and her mother at the door of their home an hour later, but he did not have the

opportunity of holding the little white hand in his for one moment, or of holding even a word of conversation with her.

"Well," said Mrs. Drummond, when she and

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her daughter found themselves alone for a moment, "I saw him take you to the conservatory. You were gone a long time. Did he propose?"

"Yes," returned the girl, languidly.

"Yes!" echoed Mrs. Drummond. "Why, how can you take it so calmly, my Mabel? You accepted him, of course?"

"No," returned the girl, calmly. "I said that I would like to have two months to consider the matter before the subject was broached to you."

"You are mad, Mabel!" cried her mother. "A wealthy young man like that is not captured every day."

"We are not so poor, mamma, that I should make a god of wealth," said the girl.

"Oh, certainly not," said her mother; "but I have always been afraid that you would be sought after by some fortune-hunter."

## CHAPTER XX.

"I AM sorry," said Mrs. Drummond, after a moment's pause, "that you have refused to consider his suit for at least two months. Eligible young men are not so plentiful nowadays that a young girl can be so independent."

"I need not ask you what your opinion of an eligible young man is," said the young girl, throwing back her head haughtily, "for I know you would answer—a large bank account. But in my opinion that does not constitute all, where the happiness of a life-time is at stake. I would rather marry a man whose reputation was spotless, if he did not have a second coat to his back. There is something more than money in this world to make our happiness. I am glad instead of sorry that I refused to give him an answer for two months. I shall demand to know who the young girl is who came to our door, and what she is to him."

"Then you will be doing a very unwise thing," declared her mother, emphatically. "Let well enough alone. I told the girl to call around tomorrow night, and when she comes I will have a talk with her."

"Will you permit me to be present at the interview, mamma?"

"By no means!" exclaimed Mrs. Drummond, with asperity. "The story that no doubt will be unfolded to me is not for ears such as yours. I will tell as much to you as I deem necessary for you to know; let that suffice."

But the young beauty and heiress was not to be appeased. She made up her mind to see the girl at all hazards when she should come; but, much to the surprise of both mother and daughter, the girl did not put in an appearance.

"That day passed, as did also the next and the next. A week went by and lengthened into a fortnight, and still the girl came not.

"You see, my dear, her statement was false!" cried Mrs. Drummond, triumphantly. "She feared that we would investigate her story, and she was no doubt a fraud. If you believe all those strange stories you hear, you will have enough to do. She was no doubt looking for hush-money, and when I did not offer to give it to her, you see she did not return."

This seemed quite the truth, as Mabel saw it.

"You need have no hesitation in believing my solution of it. Why, do you know there are women walking the streets evenings for the very purpose of noting into what houses those young society men go, and then without rhyme or reason they get up these falsehoods about them, depending upon hush-money to keep down a sensation. I do not like to speak of such matters before you, but in this instance you must know that there are people in the world besides honourable ones. I am glad that young Mr. Monk does not dream of this, or he would be greatly distressed."

And thus it was, that against her will and better judgment the girl was led to believe that her lover had been maliciously maligned.

How wrong it had been to even suspect him! She made up her mind that if he should broach the subject before the time she had named, she might not refuse his pleading.

She was expecting him that very evening. He came at last, looking so handsome, so buoyant, that the girl's heart went out to him at once, as the hearts of so many women had done.

He brought her some beautiful violets, and he knew, he had as good as won her when he saw her fasten them in the bodice of her dress.

For a few moments Mabel felt a little constrained, as all young girls do, upon greeting the lover who had proposed only the evening before. He saw it, and managed most adroitly to put her at her ease.

"Not only have I brought you the violets, Mabel—Miss Drummond—but I have brought you a piece of music that is my favourite."

He unwrapped it as he spoke. A beautiful flush overspread her cheeks; her eyes drooped.

"Why, this is my favourite song," she said, the charming flush deepening on her beautiful patrician face.

"I ran it over on the piano just before I started from the house to-night."

"I did not know that you played or sang," she exclaimed; adding: "Won't you sing it for me?"

He crossed over to the grand piano with the music in his hand, and placed it on the rack. His fingers ran lightly over the keys. A moment later his musical voice filled the room.

How was she to know that a skilled master had been engaged to teach him that song, which he sang for all women? He had a deep, melodious voice, true and sympathetic. The song was "Last Night."

The sweet, passionate voice seemed to float around the room. Kenward Monk turned slowly from the piano.

Mabel Drummond was sitting in a velvet armchair but a short distance away. Her beautiful face was softened, more so than he had ever seen it before, the smile on her lips was sweeter—the proud, half-defiant, flashing loveliness seemed all at once to grow gentle.

His face flushed; a great trembling came over the great stalwart figure. He knew that he could live no longer unless that beautiful face smiled for him, and the crimson lips whispered the words that he craved to hear:

"Heaven itself, my darling, is praying for you, for you."

"And I am praying for you, my darling. You have the simple, loving heart of a child. Mabel, my darling!" he cried, "let my love wake it; let me tell you what poetry, music, and things sad, beautiful, and sweet mean. Oh, my darling, I was foolish to sing that song; it has set my heart on fire. Come with me into the shadow of the lace curtains of the bay-window, where I can speak to you without being observed by the servants who are continually passing the door."

The fair, handsome man bending over her was not to be trifled with. The command in the imperious blue eyes was not to be disobeyed. "I have tried to be patient, and to wait the allotted time for your answer, but only one day has passed, and I find it almost impossible to stand the suspense. Do not be cruel to me, Mabel. If you love me, you might as well give me my answer now."

She was silent. If she had never loved him before, she loved him now. The song had awakened her heart.

(To be continued.)

THE Hindoos consider their dead as sacred, and do not allow them to be handled by alien hands, the nearest male relative—son, father, or brother—preparing the body for burial; and if there be none of these relatives, a son is adopted by the family for the purpose.

THE Chinese are said to possess astonishing secrets in the matter of confectionaries. They remove the pulp from oranges and substitute various jellies. The closest examination fails to reveal any incision in the skin of the fruit. They perform the same feat with eggs.

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## FACETILE.

HE : "Why was woman created, anyway?" SHE : "So man could have someone to blame for his misfortune."

HE : "I am willing to admit that I was wrong." SHE : "Ah! but you must admit that I was right!"

SHE : "They tell me, professor, that you have mastered all the modern tongues." HE : "All but two—my wife's and her mother's."

LOUISE (looking back at her friend) : "They say Ella is unhappily married, and yet there she has on another new hat."

"My wife and I are one," explained the coloured gentleman, adding, with a smile that was childlike and bland, "and I am de one."

"Was he secretary or treasurer of the company?" "Well, they supposed he was only secretary until after he had gone."

DOCTOR : "Did your visit to the seaside have the desired effect, madam?" MRS. FULLPURSE : "Oh, yes, doctor, both my daughters are married."

EMPLOYER : "I dismissed my last watchman on account of his intemperate habits. Now, are you sober?" APPLICANT : "Yes, sir; very often."

SHE : "I know there's something I've forgotten to buy." HE : "That's just what I thought!" SHE : "Why did you think so?" HE : "Because you have some money left."

PAT : "Molke, yez ud better taak th' umbrerly." MIKE : "Mike! Ol don't belave it'll rain." PAT : "No more do Ol. Av Ol did, Ol'd kape it for meillf."

"What do you intend to get your husband for a birthday present?" "I can't make up my mind whether to give him lace curtains, a dinner-set, new portières, or a drawing-room clock."

BOSTONIAN : "Is this friend that you wish to bring to dinner much of a raconteur?" CHICAGO MAN : "Blamed if I know; but say, you'll die laughin' if we can get him out to tellin' stories."

"I AM very sorry, Captain Brown, but circumstances over which I have no control compel me to say no." "May I ask what the circumstances are?" "Yours."

OLD GENT : "Want to marry my daughter, eh? What's your occupation, young man?" "I'm a literary man." "Yes; but what do you do for a living?"

"How do you know he isn't a University man?" "He had two opportunities to say 'Varsity' while I was talking to him, and he didn't do it either time."

"MABEL, how long has young Spoonamore been coming to see you?" "Four years, papa." "You can tell him I think that's long enough." "He knows it is. He's coming to see you next time."

GEORGE : "My dear, if I cannot leave the office in time for dinner to-night, I will send you a note by a messenger." "You need not go to that expense. I have already found the note in your overcoat pocket."

"Is that your wife on a bicycle?" "It is." "I thought you said that you would never permit her to ride one." "I don't permit it, but what difference do you suppose that makes to her?"

HER FATHER : "Young man, can you afford to marry?" PROSPECTIVE SON-IN-LAW : "Certainly. I have a friend who has just been ordained as a minister, and he is willing to perform the ceremony for nothing just for practice."

"I AM told," remarked Miss Cayenne, "that you said some very clever things last evening." "Yes," replied Willie Wishington : "It is very discouraging." "What is it?" "The surprised manner in which everybody is talking about it."

ETHEL : "Charley gave me such a lovely ring for Christmas; it—" HELEN : "I am so glad you like it, dear. He was very uncomfortable about it." "Why?" "Because I wouldn't accept it."

BOUTTOWN : "This woman's emancipation movement isn't such a bad thing, after all. I've been keeping company with Miss Strongoul lately, and I rather like it." UPTON : "In what way, particularly?" BOUTTOWN : "Well, for one thing, she insists on paying her own expenses."

A MAN who had been indulging too heavily since the New Year was induced to sign the pledge. "You must let me have it," said the wife. "I will keep it for you." So the pledge was handed over to the wife's custody. The next day the man was drinking again as freely as before. "How is this?" asked a friend. "You signed the pledge yesterday, and now you are drinking again." "It is all right," replied the pledge-signer in unsteady tones. "I don't have to keep that pledge. My wife says she will keep it for me. That's the kind of wife to have, old fellow. Let's have a drink!"



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## SOCIETY.

The Queen is expected at Clémiez on March 10th, and will stay there until about April 24th, according to present plans.

PRINCESS BEATRICE had intended to make a short tour in North Italy during the Queen's stay at Clémiez, as she was anxious to visit Venice; but the plan has been given up. It is probable that Princess Beatrice will go to the Italian lakes at Whitstable for a month during the Queen's spring residence at Balmoral.

PRINCE WALDEMAR of Denmark, who is now a captain in the Danish Navy, will leave Copenhagen in April on a cruise to India and Siam in the warship *Eyn*, and he will probably be accompanied by his nephew, Prince Charles; in which case Princess Maud is to come back to England in April with the Princess of Wales, and will stay with her parents during her husband's absence.

THE Duchess of Coburg and her daughter, Princess Beatrice, are paying visits to the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse at Darmstadt and the King and Queen of Württemberg at Stuttgart before they go to Nice to join the Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Roumania, who are to reside at the Château de Fabron until the end of April. The Grand Duchess of Hesse is to accompany her mother to Nice, and the Grand Duke Ernest is going to St. Petersburg.

AT the especial wish of Queen Wilhelmina, her coronation is to take place with as little ceremony as possible, and in consequence it is expected that very few Royal guests will be invited to Berlin. The German Emperor had intended to be present, and it had been expected that many other Sovereigns would be present in person. Amsterdam is a very socialistic town, and on more than one occasion the Dutch Royal Family have had unpleasant experiences in their capital.

THE Queen's journey from Windsor to Clémiez is to occupy three nights, according to the latest arrangements, in order that her Majesty may travel with as little fatigue as possible, and the Royal train from Cherbourg to Nice will proceed at a reduced speed. The Queen is to leave Windsor about four o'clock on the afternoon of Tuesday, March 8th, and her Majesty will travel direct to Portsmouth Harbour, where she is to embark at the south railway jetty on board the *Victoria and Albert*. The Queen will dine and sleep on board the yacht, which is to be moored in the stream for the night. On Wednesday the *Victoria and Albert* will leave for Caenbourg about noon, and her Majesty is again to dine and sleep on board, the yacht being moored in the harbour at Cherbourg. On Thursday morning, after breakfast, the Queen will leave Cherbourg for Nice, starting from the port station, and her Majesty is to arrive at Clémiez about half-past five on the afternoon of Friday the 11th.

MUCH interest attaches to the engagement of the Hon. Derek Keppel, and the Hon. Miss Bridget Harbord, youngest daughter of Lord and Lady Suffield. The bridegroom-elect is Esquire to the Duke of York, while the father of his fiancee is A.D.C. to the Queen. The Hon. Derek Keppel has been a member of the Duke of York's household ever since his marriage, he and Lady Eva Greville — now Lady Eva Dugdale, with whom the Duchess of York has just been staying — having been the very closest associates of the Duke and Duchess of York during the whole of their married life. Lady Eva Dugdale speedily became engaged, but the Hon. Derek Keppel has up to the present been regarded as a hopeless bachelor. He has, however, been thrown a great deal into the society of his future wife both in Norfolk and in London, and it was during the late hunting season in Sandringham that matters were brought to a crisis. The Queen is greatly interested in the engagement, and the wedding will be one of the most important social events of the coming season.

## STATISTICS.

THE bones and muscles of the human body are capable of over 1,200 different movements.

DURING the last 25 years the American people have imported £36,000,000 worth of precious stones.

THERE are 320,000 maidservants in London — a number nearly equal to the whole population of Sheffield.

THE tunnels of the world are estimated to number about 1,142, with a total length of 514 miles.

THE shoe factories use 1,000,000 kangaroo skins yearly. Australians have begun to raise and breed kangaroos as they would sheep.

AT Acheen alone 800 tons of steel wire are used up annually in the manufacture of needles — 4,500,000,000 in number, valued at £300,000.

## GEMS.

THAT which history can best give is the enthusiasm which it raises in our hearts.

TRUE nobility is shown by gentle consideration and courtesy to all, and brings its own reward in the extra fineness of perception its practice bestows.

TRUTH self-denial, and make its practice pleasurable, and you create for the world a destiny more sublime than ever issued from the brain of the wildest dreamer.

GOOD resolutions are like vines, a mass of beauty when supported on a frame of good deeds, but very poor things when allowed to lie unheeded and untrained on the ground.

IT may be truly said that no man does any work perfectly, who does not enjoy his work. Joy in one's work is the consummate tool without which the work may be done indeed but without its finest perfection.

THE agony of one age is the birth of a better life for its child, and every martyr gains some good for those following. It is a ghastly struggle any way one looks at it, but it is not meaningless nor fruitless. The day breaks slowly; and the sun, as yet, hardly pierces through the black cloud; but the east is glowing, and the darkest is past.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SOFT GINGERBREAD.—Mix one egg, one half a cup of butter together; add one cup of molasses, then dissolve two teaspoonsfuls of soda in a half cup of lukewarm milk, and pour it in. Next put in a teaspoonful of allspice, a teaspoonful of ginger, and a teaspoonful of cinnamon; add two cups of flour; bake the cake in a good-sized dripping pan, well-buttered, and bake slowly.

GREEN PEPPER CROQUETTES.—Select good-sized, firm peppers and wash thoroughly. Remove the seeds and parboil the skins. When these are cool stuff with minced chicken or veal, well seasoned, and combined with cooked maran or bread crumbs. Set them in a pan with a little water to prevent burning, and bake until nicely brown. A cream sauce is a great addition.

CARROT PUDDING.—Boil some large carrots till they are tender, and pass them through a sieve; mix 1 lb. of the pulp with  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. fine bread crumbs, 6 oz. finely chopped suet,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. raisins (stoned),  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. currants,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. sugar, pinch of salt, and grate of nutmeg; mix all well, and add three eggs well beaten; put this in a well-greased mould, and steam for three hours; it may be put in a pudding dish, and baked for an hour; to make a dumpling one egg is enough, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. more bread; for all three ways it needs a little sweet milk to moisten it.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THERE is a clock in Brussels that is kept going by the wind.

IT is said that there is in Sonora a tribe of Indians with yellow hair and blue eyes.

THE waters of the Grand Falls of Labrador have excavated a chasm thirty miles long.

THE Polar currents are said to contain less salt than those from the Equator.

In France the doctor of the theatre has a seat given him for every performance. He must be there every evening.

AMERICA practically supplies the entire world with clocks, nearly every civilised nation importing them from that country.

SEVERAL of the catacombs at Rome are now lighted by electricity, and the system will soon be extended to all the catacombs.

SIMLA, India, is built on the side of a steep hill, and the roof of one house is often on a level with the foundation of one in the next tier.

THE earliest complete clock of which an accurate record exists was made in the thirteenth century by a Saracen mechanic.

IN Abyssinia, not so very long ago, salt was the principal medium of exchange, being practically used as money.

It is said that the English language is better spoken in Huntingdonshire than in any other part of the kingdom.

QUEEN VICTORIA's crown, made in 1838, contains 2,783 diamonds, 277 pearls, 17 emeralds, 17 sapphires, and 5 rubies.

CYMBALS are believed to be among the earliest musical inventions. They were used in Egypt at least 4,000 years before Christ.

DURING the Middle Ages the strength of every army was reckoned by the number of knights, footmen being deemed of no value.

It is said the entire African race in America is gradually becoming bleached out, and that in the process of years the black face will disappear entirely.

AT Gonoatos, in the South Seas, every man, woman, or child on that island who does not go to church at least three times a week is liable to be arrested and fined.

A REMARKABLE shell has been discovered in the Fiji Islands. It has a peculiar formation in its throat which causes it to whistle when in an excited state.

THE geranium has its name from two Latin words signifying "crane's bill," the reference being to the beak-like torus projecting beyond the seeds.

THE Escorial Palace in Spain contains a cathedral, a monastery with two hundred cells, two colleges, three chapter-houses, three libraries, and nearly 3,000 other rooms.

It is not generally known that whenever the Queen goes abroad she always has a couple of fire extinguishers sent out in advance and fitted in the house she is to reside in.

AN automatic electric music leaf-turner is one of the latest patents. It is claimed for it that it can be easily attached to any piano music-rack, and it is operated by touching a button with the foot.

THE largest wine-tank in the world has been completed in California. Its capacity is 500,000 gallons, and it is built underground. The tank, or reservoir, is built of concrete, cement, and iron.

NATURALISTS declare that the kestrel is possessed of such wonderful powers of sight that it is able to see a mouse when it is itself at such a height in the air that it is invisible to the naked human eye.

THE British Museum contains six chairs, the earliest examples of the ancient Egyptian theories, and all about the same height as our present chairs. A beautiful one is of ebony, turned in the lathe and inlaid with collars and discs of ivory, the seat being heavy cane slightly hollowed.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**CICIL.**—There is no such tunnel.

**E. F.**—The next leap year will be 1904.

**BETTY.**—You must try a colourless varnish.

**GERALD.**—There is no regular market for seaweed.

**A. A.**—A lawyer, after seeing the will, can advise you.

**JOLLY JACK.**—Apply to some shipowner or shipping agent.

**R. L.**—We doubt whether there is one available in London.

**ALWYN.**—You can obtain it from the office of the company.

**FUZZED.**—The intrinsic value of one penny is less than a farthing.

**ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.**—Her nearest relative gives the hints away.

**CAREFUL.**—It can, at any rate, do no harm to take it through a tube or a straw.

**ALICE.**—We are informed there is no satisfactory home method of doing what you require.

**UNSCRIBED.**—The best and most promising trade for a youth to learn is the one he feels himself fit for.

**ADA.**—Never let the lamp wick grow very short. Supply a fresh one when the old one seems clogged and stiff.

**O. L.**—“The term of natural life” has no meaning in legal sentences except the obvious one—namely, for the whole life.

**CONSTANT READER.**—If the widow has any property which belonged to her late husband, she is so far liable for his debts.

**M. H.**—The swiftest river in the world is the Sutlej, in India. At one part of it there is a descent of 12,000 feet in 108 miles.

**PATRY.**—The prefix “O” before so many of the names of Irish families is an abbreviation of the word “ogha,” meaning grandchild.

**F. P.**—The distinction “Father of the House” is applied to the member who has had a seat in the House for the greatest number of years.

**GRACE.**—First of all wear easier shoes. You have been wearing shoes too small, or that fit badly, and the pressure has caused the swelling.

**DICK.**—Dramatic copyright extends until forty years from the first production, or seven years after the writer’s death—whichever is the longer period.

**DIMINISHER.**—When old coins are so worn that it is hard to make out the inscription, the coin may be gradually heated, and in almost all cases the inscription will appear.

**Curious.**—Flint knives were used before iron was discovered; but that happened early, Tubal-Cain, contemporary with Noah, being “an instructor of every artifice in brass and iron.”

**ENTERPRISE.**—It would be simply suicidal for you to think of going out to Klondyke in the spring with your husband, while possessing little more than would cover your fare to the district.

**Laura.**—Wash the lamp chimney every day and the shade, if it is of glass or porcelain, at least once a week. Dry the chimney with the regular drying cloth, and polish with soft newspapers or chamois.

**OLD READER.**—One of the surest moves would be to put yourself in communication with some one who has had experience in that climate and knows the needs of the residents and govern yourself accordingly.

**JUDITH.**—Belladonna is a deadly poison, and should never be applied to the eyes except by the hands of an experienced oculist or physician. The result of its frequent and indiscriminate use is total blindness.

**PEPPER’S TONIC.**  
Promotes Appetite.  
CURES DYSPEPSIA, HYSTERIA, NERVOUS COMPLAINTS.  
SHILLING BOTTLES.

**SULPHOLINE LOTION.**  
A SPOTLESS SKIN.  
A BEAUTIFUL COMPLEXION.  
ERUPTIONS, PIMPLES  
ENTIRELY FADE AWAY.

**H. H.**—It may be necessary to retard some of the plants in order to keep up a succession of bloom. This may be done by taking them into a cooler room and giving less water.

**S. M.**—One part ivory black, half as much treacle, an eighth part sweet oil, then add quarter part oil of vitriol and eighth part of hydrochloric acid; mix each ingredient with three times its weight of water before putting in.

**INHABITANT.**—A “hydro” properly means a boarding-house where the guests are subject to medical treatment by baths, regimen, &c.; but it is commonly used by what are essentially ordinary boarding establishments.

**R. N.**—Wash first in soap and water to remove grease, then rinse in clean warm water to remove all trace of soap; then steep in a hot decoction of logwood, keeping the heat up for a couple of hours, or as long as necessary to obtain the shade you desire.

**HARRIET.**—Having stood for six months it is fit to bottle. See that the bottles are perfectly clean and quite dry and have good cork, each of which should be dipped into the wine or, better still, into brandy before using. Fill the bottles, so that the wine will just come into contact with the cork.

**JANE.**—To two gallons water add two ounces bruised ginger and two pounds of sugar; boil half an hour, skin, and pour into a jar or tub with sliced lemon and half ounce cream of tartar; when nearly cold add a cupful of yeast; let it work for two days; then strain, bottle, and cork; a preference is given to stone bottles.

**INDEPENDENT.**—Under all ordinary circumstances young persons who start out in life defying public opinion and the wishes of their friends will come to grief. They have no right to set themselves up as opposed to the ordinary usages and customs of society, and in so doing they make a mistake the consequences of which may never leave them during their lives. It is incumbent on the young as well as the old to take care what sort of example they set.

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**NOTICE.**—Part 441, is Now Ready, price Sixpence, post free, Eightpence. Also Vol. LXIX., bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

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\* \* \* We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

# £50 BANK NOTE

GIVEN AWAY to purchasers of ZUILIA, the new INDIAN Perfume, solely manufactured by the ZUILIA Perfumery Company, 19, Rosebery Avenue, London, E.C. Put up in artistic bottles, packed in wool, in handsome box, 1s. 6d., sent carriage free, per return, for 1s. 6d.

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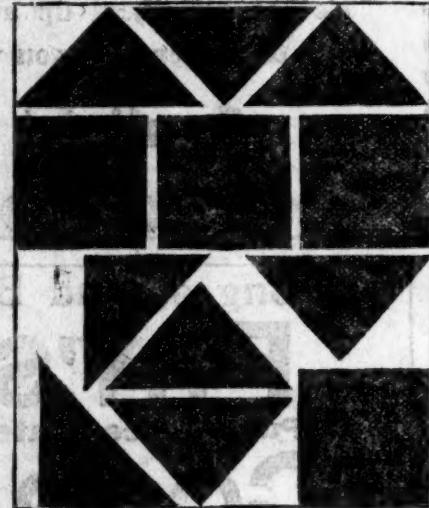
## A SPECIAL OFFER.

£50 will be given gratis to purchasers who succeed in placing together the twelve pieces to form a square.

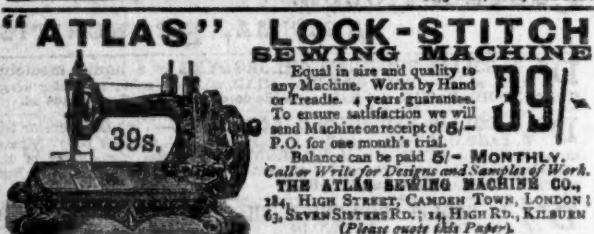
**INSTRUCTIONS.**—Cut out the pieces, and place together in such a way that the whole will form an ordinary square. When done, paste on card-board or thick paper (in order to keep the square together), then post the same to us with a stamped envelope addressed, enclosing P.O. or stamps value 1s. 6d. for ZUILIA scent.

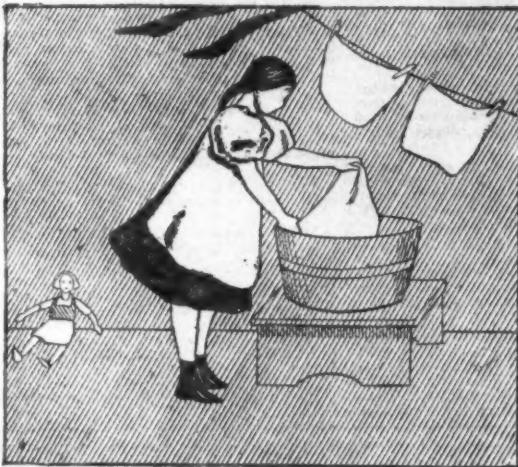
**Note-Ben.**—This offer holds good for readers of this paper for the next fourteen days. Should there be more than one person succeed in forming the square, then the £50 will be divided thus: If two correct, then each will receive £25; if five correct, then each will receive £10; if ten, then each will receive £5; and so on. The task set being very difficult, it is anticipated that few will succeed in solving, thus making the remuneration very substantial.

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